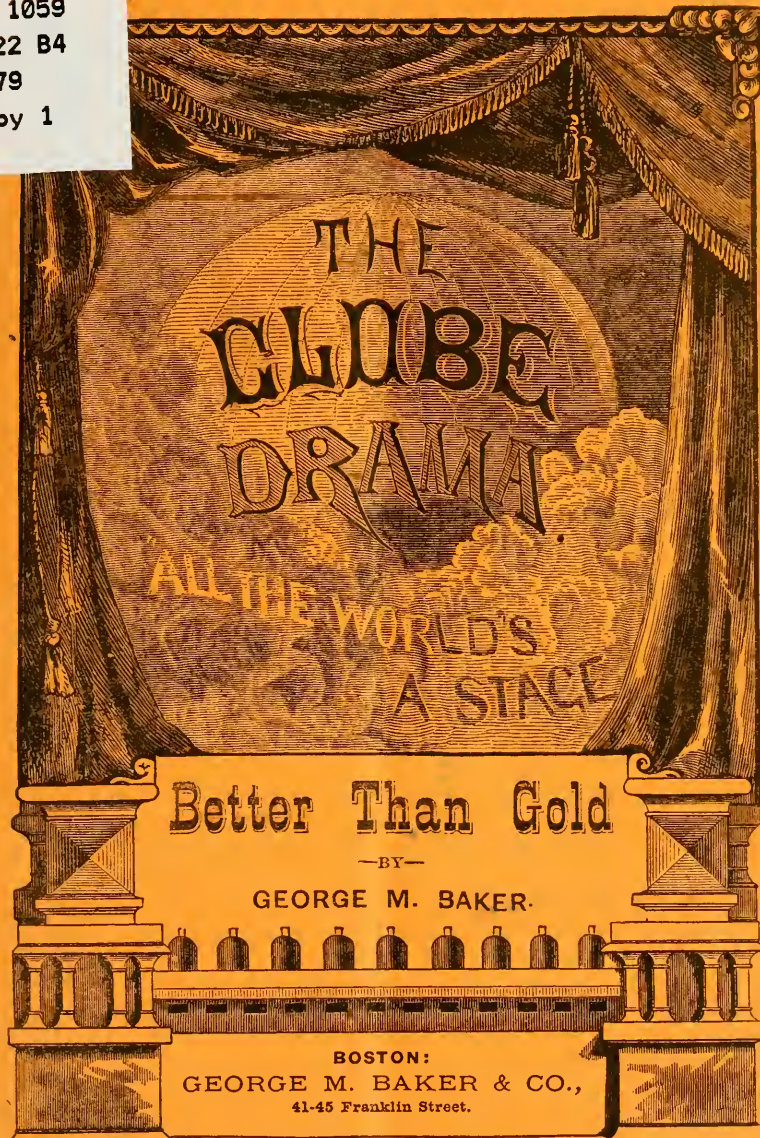


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BOSTON:

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CHARACTERS.

PETER PERCHANT, a lawyer.
GILBERT MURDOCH.
TOM PAYSON.
RICHARD GORDON.
ASA, a colored servant.
MRS. GARFIELD, housekeeper at Gilroy.
ANNIE GARFIELD, her daughter.
BELLE GORDON.
JENNIE JOY, a seamstress.

COSTUMES.

Peter. Acts I., III., and IV., blue coat with brass buttons, nankeen pants and vest, gray wig, hat. Act II., black clothes, white tie, gloves and hat.

Gilbert. Acts I. and IV., light gray suit, mustache, straw hat. Act II., shooting-jacket, leggings, game-bag, cap, mustache and goatee; florid face. Act III., rough and ragged hair and beard, haggard face, dark pants, calico shirt, black frock, no vest; general appearance of a played-out drunkard.

Tom Payson. Acts I. and IV., light summer suit, straw hat, red curly wig and mustache, gloves and cane, for first act. Act II., dark clothes, white tie, green bag, and black hat. Act III., black pants, black frock-coat buttoned up to neck, out at elbows; general shabby appearance.

Richard. Act I., black curly wig, mustache, dark pants, blue shirt, black neckerchief, dark coat, slouch hat. Act II., fashionable summer suit. Act III., light pants and vest, velveteen breakfast-jacket, heavy chain, diamond pin. Act IV., same as Act I., with change of coat for shooting-jacket as worn by Gilbert in Act II., and leggings.

Asa. Black dress suit, white tie, white gloves, except when he appears with Belle in Act III. as coachman; then, white coat, tall black hat with gold band, gloves and whip.

Mrs. Garfield. Gray wig and cap, dark dress.

Annie. Simple summer dresses for Acts I. and IV. Act II., pink. Act III., white, to suit taste.

Belle. Act I., elegant evening dress of light material. Act II., summer dress, with hat and lace shawl. Act III., black dress, white collar and cuffs, straw hat with broad band and black ribbon. Act IV., pretty morning dress.

Jennie. Acts I. and IV., figured muslin. Act II., extravagant colors, hat and light shawl. Act III., dark calico dress, bonnet, and shawl.

This play is so arranged that the first and fourth acts form a complete play, or it can be performed in three acts by omitting the third, which, from its tragic termination, may be distasteful to many. The partiality of amateurs for melodramatic action, however, leads the author to believe the stirring third act will seldom be omitted.

SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAMME.

ACT I. — AWAITING FORTUNE.

Gilroy. — The Housekeeper's Story. — An impatient Heiress. — A sharp Seamstress and an astonished Lover. — Tom's Blunders, "It's just like me." — The missing Will. — "I'll find it, or perish in the Attempt." — An interrupted Confession. — Belle's Tactics. — Too Late. — "On no Battle-field were the Dead ever known to rise again." — The Prodigal's Return. — The Compact. — The Will is found. — Hard Condition. — Rosy Wine. — The Tempter and his Victim. — Dick's Strategy. — Wine works Wonders. — Tom makes another Blunder, "It's just like me."

ACT II. — THE LADY OF GILROY.

Gilbert's Inheritance. — Dick in Love. — Annie's Constancy. — An unhappy Marriage. — A scheming Prodigal. — The proud Lady. — "I have no Heart, but I have the Fortune: that contents me." — Husband and Wife. — The Appeal and the Repulse. — "I shall hate you." — Tom's Troubles. — The Deed of Gilroy. — Annie's Appeal. — Tom makes a Sad Mistake. — The Happy Couple. — May and December. — "I'm so sick." — "Just like *me*." — Gilbert stakes all. — The new Master of Gilroy.

ACT III. — "WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN."

Dick in Possession. — Tom's Downfall. — The lucky Cards. — "See how it is yourself." — The frightened Lawyer. — The Wife he left behind him. — Conjugal Felicity. — One Glass, "It won't go down." — Constant Annie. — Tom to the Rescue. — The Vagabond. — "It's come to this at last." — A Late Visitor. — Confidential Disclosures. — A Surprise. — "Would you rob me of my Wife?" — The Quarrel. — "Now it is my turn." — The Fatal Shot. — "*Free!* Heaven help me, I am mad!"

ACT IV. — THE AWAKENING.

Troubled Sleep. — "His head am lebel now." — A terrified Darkey. — The Sportsman. — "'Twas but a Dream." — Tom's thick Head. — "A Message from the Dead." — Dick's Remorse. — Rejected Conditions. — "Who is Heir?" — Tom on Hand. — Enter Peter. — "The Paper left in the Box marked G." — Love and Law. — Still in Doubt. — Tom takes his Hat to go, but stays. — Found at last. — A Fair Division. — "Happy the Man who wakes to find that Misery is but a Dream; that Truth and Honor are the Germs of Happiness; and, best of all, that True Love is
BETTER THAN GOLD."

BETTER THAN GOLD.

ACT I.

SCENE.— *Handsome apartment; doors C. opening upon a piazza with railing, backed by garden; windows R. and L. of door C., with lace curtains; doors R. and L. Table R. C., with work-basket on it; ottoman R.; small desk back of ottoman. Lounge L.; small table at head of lounge; chairs at windows. JENNIE JOY at table, sewing; MRS. GARFIELD reclining on lounge; C. doors open.*

MRS. G. I'm glad to get a moment's rest. A funeral upsets a house so, it seems as if there was no setting it to rights again,— too many people tramping in and out with idle curiosity, to look at the dead face of a man who left a fortune.

JENNIE. Had Mr. Gordon no relatives?

MRS. G. Only a son, whom he disowned, and drove from home five years ago. Ah! Dick was a sad dog, a very bad boy. Had he behaved himself, he would have had all; and it's a very great sum, Jennie; I shouldn't wonder if it was half a million.

JENNIE. Mr. Gordon was very peculiar, but a generous man certainly.

MRS. G. Yes: people used to call this house an orphan-asylum, because he adopted Belle, and helped Gilbert and Tom to an education. He never made many friends outside his home, and had but one enemy: that was himself. He was too fond of eating and drinking, or he'd be alive now. Belle was the daughter of an old friend, whom dissi-

pation ruined: they were boon companions in many a drinking bout; and I think a little remorse for the part he took in his down-hill career caused him to befriend Belle as he has done. Tom Payson — you know him, Jennie?

JENNIE. Oh, yes! a slight acquaintance: he is clerk for Mr. Perchant.

MRS. G. A slight acquaintance? Ah, Jennie! your blushes betray you. Tom's a good fellow, but rather odd.

JENNIE. They are all odd until they are mated.

MRS. G. Mr. Gordon was always fond of Tom. I think his oddities amused him. Then there's Gilbert Murdoch: he's a mystery.

JENNIE. He's a gentleman: there's no mystery about that. Everybody likes Mr. Murdoch (*smiles*), even your Annie.

MRS. G. You are right: he is a gentleman. I think Mr. Gordon would have been pleased if he had married Belle. There was a queer story that Gilbert's mother was an old flame of Mr. Gordon, that at the death of his wife he privately married her; but I don't believe it. I think that his kind heart prompted him to care for the little waif left at his door.

JENNIE. Then he will be carefully provided for, no doubt. Did Mr. Gordon leave a will?

MRS. G. Mr. Perchant says he did: but, strangely enough, after the funeral yesterday, the lawyer was unable to produce it, and begged for a little time; we have been expecting him all day.

(*Enter BELLE, door R.*)

BELLE. Any news of Mr. Perchant?

MRS. G. (*rising*). None. Have patience, Belle: good fortune travels slow, you know; but it will come, never fear.

BELLE (*petulantly*). Patience, indeed! What kind of a lawyer is this, who hides his client's papers where they cannot be found? If that will be lost, we are all ruined. If I should be lucky enough to come into possession, I'd have a better lawyer to manage my affairs than Mr. Peter Perchant.

(*Enter ASA, door R., with a note.*)

ASA. Miss Belle, here am a note for you.

BELLE (*takes note*). It must be from him. (*Opens and reads*). "Dearest," — what's this? — "I am coming for you

to-night, very early; a stroll in the garden, and all the delights of love's young dream, with yours, devotedly,

TOM PAYSON."

JENNIE (*screams*). Good gracious!

MRS. G. What's the matter, Jennie?

JENNIE. I — I — pricked my finger, that's all.

BELLE. The insolent puppy. Does that blundering fellow dare to write this to me? I'll have him horsewhipped — fool! (*Exit door R.*)

ASA. Now, now, now, jes hear dat chile rabe, an' — an' — obsequies here only yesterday, and Massa Gordon jes put comfortably away in his sar-cor-pi-gust — poor ole man! (*Exit door R.*)

MRS. G. It's very plain she expects to rule here. Is the dress nearly finished, Jennie?

JENNIE. Only a stitch, and it is done.

MRS. G. Carry it to Belle's room when ready. (*Exit door R.*)

JENNIE (*throws down dress*). Oh the villain, the hypocrite, the base deceitful wretch! After his vows to me, to hear such language to another! I'd like to scratch his eyes out. Just like them all: he's found out she is the heiress, and hastens to lay his heart at her feet. I just wish he'd lay it at mine. I'd trample it to pieces. (*Tramples dress.*) Mercy! what am I about? (*Picks up dress, and resumes sewing.*)

TOM (*outside C., sings*).

"I know a maiden fair to see:
Beware — take care!"

(*Appears in door C.*) And there she is.

JENNIE (*to herself*). There he is, the villain! "Beware, take care" — you'd better, Mr. Tom Payson.

TOM (*comes down softly, stands behind her chair, and puts his arm around her waist*). Sweetest and best. (*JENNIE sticks needle into his hand.*) Ow — oh! (*Crosses to right of her, rubbing his hand.*) That hurts.

JENNIE (*rises*). I'm glad of it. Wretch!

TOM. Jennie! (*Backs to R.*)

JENNIE (*following him*). Deceiver!

TOM (*backing*). Miss Joy?

JENNIE. Villain!

TOM (*backs to side*). I'd just like to know.

JENNIE. Silence! I've found you out! I've discovered your tricks! the mask is torn away! Wretch! deceiver! villain! (*Goes L., and turns her back to him.*)

TOM (*looking at her wonderingly*). Miss Joy, if you have discharged your magazine of ejaculatory extracts from the cheap literature of the day, permit the counsel for the defendant to ask mildly, (*shouts*) What in thunder is all this about?

JENNIE (*turns*). Have you not, within an hour, written and sent a note to Miss Belle Gordon?

TOM. The counsel for the prosecution is right. I have.

JENNIE. It was opened and read in my presence, — read aloud. Now tremble! Your perfidy is known.

TOM. Well, I'll try to, Jennie, to please you. (*Puts his hand to his breast, after a pause.*) No: innocence sleeps peacefully within this breast, and refuses even to quiver. Nary a shake! Has the counsel for the prosecution —

JENNIE. Oh, bother! (*Turns away.*)

(*Enter ASA, R.*)

ASA. I ax your apology, Miss Joy. Under de solemn provocation ob dis distressful season ob grief an' — an' dat poor ole man, you know (*wipes eyes with handkerchief*), gone to his rest — an' — an' — all de rest — I forgot myself, an' — an' — forgot to bring you dis note, what came wid Miss Belle's. Forgive me, for my soul am troubled for de soul ob dat poor ole man. (*Sobs, and wipes eyes.*) Dat poor ole man! (*Gives note.*)

JENNIE. Thank you, Asa. (*Opens note, and reads.*) "Dear Miss Joy, Mr. Perchant expects to be with you this evening to read the will. Respectfully yours, TOM PAYSON." What's that to me? What have I to do with the will?

TOM (*strikes his head with his doubled fists, first on one side, then on the other*). Oh, it's just like me! Jennie, can't you see it all?

JENNIE. I see you are making a fool of yourself.

TOM. It's all a mistake, a very simple mistake. Two notes, written at the same time, have been put in the wrong envelopes. You've got the law, and she all my love.

JENNIE. Oh! you confess your love for her.

TOM. No: that's another slip. Just like me! What will she think of me?

ASA. I can answer dat ar conundrum, Missa Payson. She's practise wid a—wid a—horsewhip, and she tinks you'll smart, dat she do.

TOM. Run to her, Asa; fly! Tell her it's all a mistake.

ASA. Run—fly— What, me? No, sar: dis am a house ob desolation; dat poor ole man— (*Weeps.*)

TOM. Here, Asa: here's a dollar. (*Gives money.*) Now, do go, that's a good fellow.

ASA. To be sure, to be sure. (*Looks at money.*) Any ting to do a favor; but I can't run or fly. (*Walks off slowly; at door R. turns, wipes eyes.*) Dat poor ole man! (*Exit R.*)

TOM. And now, gentlemen of the jury—

JENNIE. Mr. Payson—

TOM. I beg pardon, Jennie. You must know I am the victim of a fell and fatal disorder.

JENNIE (*alarmed*). Are you ill, Tom?

TOM. Never better in my life. The trouble's here. (*Taps head with doubled fist two or three times.*)

JENNIE. Cracked, Tom?

TOM. *Absentia mentis*. Absence of mind. It's very common, Jennie. I've got it bad. (*Puts hat on table.*) I never put an umbrella in a corner, but what I carry off some other man's. I never put my hat on a tree, but what I wear off some other fellow's tile. I trump at cards when I should follow suit; go out without my hat, and get into bed with it on my head; step upon a lady's dress, tell her it's no consequence, when I should apologize; sing out "Bravo" at church, and "Amen" at the opera; in short, make myself ridiculouſ on all occasions. Can't help it. It's just like me.

JENNIE. Oh, Tom! what will become of you?

TOM. Can't say, Jennie; perhaps sign another man's name, or run off with another man's wife. It would be just like me.

(*Enter PETER PERCHANT, C., with small bag.*)

PETER (*loud*). Well, well, well!

TOM. The governor!

PETER (*angrily*). Mr. Thomas Payson, sir!

TOM. Yes, your honor.

PETER. Don't honor me. You're a pretty fellow, ain't you?

TOM (*arranging his collar*). Well, as to my personal appearance—

PETER (*loud*). Silence!

TOM (*aside*). Silence in the court.

PETER. When six years ago, at the particular request of Mr. Gilbert Gordon, I took you into my office to study law, I thought I had a promising pupil.

TOM. Very complimentary, your honor.

PETER. Silence! You have disappointed my expectations: with every facility for becoming an ornament to the bar, you have neglected your opportunities, and miserably blundered.

TOM (*aside*). Just like me.

PETER. When three weeks ago I returned to my office from this house, with the last will and testament of Gilbert Gordon, and placed that document in your hands, what were you told to do with it? Answer me.

TOM. I was told to place it in a certain envelope in a box marked G.

PETER. You were: well, what did you do with it?

TOM. Placed it there in the box marked G.

PETER (*sneeringly*). Indeed! Quite sure of that?

TOM. I would swear to it upon the witness-stand, before an intelligent jury of my countrymen.

PETER. Humbug! there's no will there. Now, sir, I want to know, and that very soon, what have you done with that will?

TOM (*scratching his head*). Let me see. I must have — no — where was I going — oh, it must be safe — there's no doubt about it; it must be — no, no — I must have time to think.

PETER. Well, I'll give you time. I'm called away to-night to make another will. I shall return to-morrow: if it is not found by that time I'll have you indicted for theft, do you hear. It's infamous, infamous. (*Exit C.*)

TOM. Just like me.

JENNIE. O Tom! what will you do?

TOM (*striking his breast*). My duty, Jennie, — find the will, or perish in the attempt. Where's my hat? (*Seizes basket on table, and puts it on his head; spools of cotton and other articles fall out.*)

JENNIE. O Tom, my basket! it's ruined.

TOM (*drops basket, seizes hat, and runs to C.*). Just like me. (*Exit C.*)

JENNIE (*picking up articles and basket*). The crazy-head! I'm afraid he'll never be a great lawyer like Mr. Perchant. No matter: I think he loves me, and a heart full of love is better than a head full of law. (*Takes dress, and exit door R.*)

(*Enter C. GILBERT and ANNIE.*)

ANNIE. I've had a delightful walk.

GILBERT. And so have I, thanks to good company.

ANNIE (*goes to lounge, and sits*). There cannot be a more charming spot in the whole world than Gilroy. Mr. Gordon has spared no expense in adorning it, and its natural beauties are just lovely.

GILBERT (*leans on chair at table*). Yes, there are few places can equal it. I hope its lucky possessor will have the good taste to preserve it.

ANNIE. And who do you think will be its lucky possessor?

GILBERT. Belle, of course.

ANNIE. I do not agree with you. Mr. Gordon was fond of her; but so he was of Tom Payson and you. He was equally generous with all. Why should he not in his will have been equally impartial?

GILBERT. Because both Tom and myself have been told time and again we must have no expectations in that direction.

ANNIE. But perhaps, should Belle be the heiress, you might still be the lucky possessor.

GILBERT. Impossible. That is not kind of you, Annie.

ANNIE. I do not understand.

GILBERT. I understand you. You think that I might win Belle?

ANNIE. Yes.

GILBERT. I have tried and failed.

ANNIE (*rising confused*). O Gilbert!—Mr. Murdoch—I never dreamed—

GILBERT. Be seated one moment, please. (*ANNIE sits.*) I want to confess to you, because (*smiles*) I may want to confess again. When I returned from college five years ago, after Richard Gordon had been sent adrift, it was Mr. Gordon's wish that I should marry Belle. Well, I was young, heart-whole; and being grateful to Mr. Gordon for his kindness, desirous of pleasing him, and being attracted

by the beauty of Belle, wooed her. When I believed she loved me, I spoke, asked her to be my wife. She refused me, laughed at my passion, and vowed she would never marry.

ANNIE. Oh! but perhaps she has changed her mind, now you are better acquainted.

GILBERT. Too late, for I have changed now. Annie, do you believe in second love?

ANNIE. I believe I — how could I —

GILBERT. I think every man experiences two loves in a lifetime. The first is a glamour, a wild intoxication; the second, a pure steady flame, brightening and warming every fibre of his being. That love has come to me now, — kindled by the bright eyes of a sweet girl, whose life is gentle and simple, whose hand dispenses charity, whose heart warms to the needy and distressed. Annie, shall I tell you her name? (*Bends over her.*)

(*Enter BELLE, door R.*)

BELLE. Dear me! have I interrupted a tete-a-tete?

GILBERT (*rising quickly*). Oh, no! come in. (*Crosses to R.*)

ANNIE (*rises*). I must run and find mother. Have you seen her, Belle?

BELLE. She is in my room.

ANNIE. Oh, thank you! (*Runs off, door R.*)

BELLE (*aside*). Very suspicious! (*Comes down to lounge, and sits.*) Gilbert, have you heard nothing about the will?

GILBERT. Nothing, Belle. I wonder at Mr. Perchant's delay. (*Walks up stage.*)

BELLE (*aside*). I wonder if he cares for me now. He loved me once: if this estate should go to him, it would be well for me to recover his affections. (*Aloud.*) Gilbert.

GILBERT (*comes down to table, and sits*). Well, Belle.

BELLE. Who will get father Gordon's money?

GILBERT. I don't know, but I think Belle Gordon will have the most of it.

BELLE. Should you be disappointed?

GILBERT. No, for I have no expectations. I have received the best inheritance a man could desire — a liberal education — from the good, kind, loving friend, who was a father to me: the dead man's money I do not covet.

BELLE. What will you do? you have been reared in luxury.

GILBERT. What will I do? Heaven willing, a man's work in the world. What we inherit may be gold and lands, the fruits of another's energy and enterprise. These are good if rightly used; what we win is something better. To wrest from fickle fortune its choicest treasures of wealth and wisdom, requires courage, — a virtue that rejoices while it battles, grows strong by defeat, and glories in its victories.

BELLE. I wish I could feel as courageous as you do; but, having nestled so long in the lap of luxury, I should make but a sorry figure, dropped upon the cold world.

GILBERT. Better fortune is in store for you: the good old man would never wrong one he loved so dearly.

BELLE. He may have changed at the last: people do, you know. Others have loved me very dearly, and changed.

GILBERT (*bitterly*). When coldly treated, yes.

BELLE. And then I have — it's very odd — some whom I have treated coldly, I have learned to esteem when I came to know them better.

GILBERT (*aside*). Is she trifling with me?

BELLE. You said just now, Gilbert, that courage grew strong from defeat: does love as well?

GILBERT (*aside*). Too late. (*Aloud.*) Yes, Belle; but on no battle-field were the dead ever known to rise again. (*Bows, and exit, door R.*)

BELLE. Fairly beaten! (*Rises.*) I could tear out my tongue for betraying me into such folly; and the lurking suspicion that he may be well remembered in the old man's will prompted me. And yet I could have loved him dearly: he is noble, handsome, a favorite with all; but now (*proudly*) I hate him. (*Flings herself on lounge.*)

(*Enter C., RICHARD (DICK) GORDON, hands in his pockets.*)

DICK. The prodigal returns to his father's home, but the old man is not here to kill the fatted calf. Well, I could hardly expect Scripture to repeat itself in my case. I'm a pretty hard lot, but I haven't come to the husks and hogs yet. Handsome property here, Dick, and should be yours; but the old man didn't let up on you at the last. If you get a slice, it will be by hard fighting against the old man's will — if he left a will; and that's just the point that I'm here to settle. (*Comes down R., sees BELLE, takes off his hat.*) Beg pardon. (*BELLE looks up.*) Why, it's Belle! (*Crosses stage quickly.*) Belle, my beauty.

BELLE (*rises, and takes his hands*). Dick, you here? Why have you returned?

DICK. Why, you don't seem glad to see me, Belle. Why have I returned? (*Mockingly.*) The old man can't drive me out again, you know.

BELLE. Don't speak so of the dead, Dick.

DICK. Why not? it's the truth, ain't it? He's dead and buried, and I'm glad of it. Did he make a will, Belle?

BELLE. He did.

DICK. Then the jig's up, as far as I am concerned. Curse him! a flinty-hearted old villain.

BELLE. Richard Gordon, I will not have such language.

DICK. All right, Belle: it's mighty mean to kick a man when he's down; and he's deep down, you bet. Belle, you're just a beauty, you are. Who gets the money?

BELLE. That I do not know. The will has not been read: it has been mislaid.

DICK. Perhaps lost. Ah! a gleam of sunshine at last. Lost! I am the heir to the old man's wealth. Gold, lands, mine! O Belle! we'll enjoy life.

BELLE. We?

DICK. To be sure. Have you forgotten the stolen interview in the garden, the night the old man kicked me out of doors,—your promise, "Come good or ill, I will be your wife"? You are not going back on me, Belle, are you?

BELLE (*agitated*). No, no, Dick: if the will is lost—

DICK. Well, suppose it's found: who inherits? You, of course; and you will share with me, as I would share with you. I've seen hard times, Belle. Luck yesterday, ruin to-day: it makes no difference. I always had a light ahead,—your love for me. I knew you would crawl into the old man's affections, and one day I should have my rights.

BELLE (*agitated*). Yes—but, Dick—

DICK. Belle, you love me still?

BELLE (*with an effort*). Can you doubt me?

(*Enter GILBERT R.*)

GILBERT. What! Dick? Old boy, welcome home!

DICK. Ah, Gil! (*They shake hands warmly in c. of stage.*) Back again, you see,—a very bad penny. (*BELLE goes to lounge. GILBERT and RICHARD converse in dumb show.*)

BELLE (*aside*). I doubt myself. Money and position,

that I crave, these I must have; but love, there's none to give. I doubt if my heart is capable of such a passion.

(Enter JENNIE R.)

JENNIE. Tom Payson is running up the avenue. What can be the matter? (Goes to door C. Enter MRS. GARFIELD and ANNIE, door C.)

MRS. G. What! Dick, you here again? (GILBERT crosses to BELLE.)

DICK (goes to her, and shakes hands). Yes, old lady, to taste your excellent pies. And here's Annie. (Shakes hands with her.) My little playmate's quite a woman.

ANNIE. Welcome, Dick, welcome home.

(Enter ASA, door R.)

ASA. Wha's de fire? Wha's de fire? Tom Payson a-running like de — whew! I almos' said it, an' — an' dat poor ole man jes gone.

DICK. Asa, you black ace, you trump of darkies, how are you?

ASA. De Lor' bress us, if dat ain't massa Dick! (Shakes hands with DICK.) An' — an' your poor ole father's gone. Poor ole man! Massa Dick, I did love dat a ole man; he was de best massa ever I seed. Why! jes de day afore he died, I was down da in de park fishing, an' he came along an' spoke to me. Nothin' proud or stuck-up about him. Poor ole man! he spoke to me.

DICK. Well, what did he say?

ASA. Tole me to get out of the way, jes as natural as ef he wasn't a-goin' to die de next day. Yes, he did; an' den he died, an' left dis poor ole darky — poor ole man.

JENNIE (at door). Here's Tom.

(Enter TOM C., puffing.)

TOM. It's all right: the will is found. For once I have got the better of my sagacious but near-sighted employer. The will was safely stowed away in the box marked G, and here it is. (Holds up will.)

DICK. Let's hear it.

TOM. Hallo, Dick, old boy! have you turned up? (Shakes hands.)

DICK. Yes, Tom. How are you?

TOM. Hearty, Dick, hearty.

DICK. Now let's hear this will; read it.

TOM. No, that would not be right: the governor is

named as executor, and he is the party who should read it. I have taken the liberty of acquainting myself with its contents; and, though I may not read, there's no harm in giving you its contents. (*Puts his hat on table at head of lounge.*)

DICK (R.). Of course not.

TOM (C.). Well, then, Dick, you are the first party mentioned in the will.

DICK. Ah! To what extent?

TOM. One dollar.

DICK. Disinherited, curse him!

TOM. Our good friend Mrs. Gaylord comes in for her share of ten thousand dollars.

MRS. G. (R. C.). How kind, bless him!

TOM. Your humble servant for a like sum; and all the remainder of his estate, real and personal, is bequeathed to—

ALL. Who?

TOM. Gilbert Murdoch.

BELLE. To him? }

GILBERT. To me? } *together.*

DICK. Fraud! }

TOM. On condition that he marries Belle Gordon.

BELLE. Indeed!

DICK. (*aside*). Never!

TOM. No: I haven't stated that just right. Gilbert and Belle are to have the property, provided they marry: either party declining the alliance, the other is to inherit.

DICK (*lively*). Ah! that's better: the old man's head was level.

BELLE (*aside*). I am safe. (*Goes up stage.*)

GILBERT (*stands L. with his arms folded*). My decision will be quickly made.

DICK (*crossing to GILBERT, gives hand*). I congratulate you, old fellow: next to myself, no one better deserves it.

GILBERT. Don't be in a hurry, Dick. (*They converse together.*)

ASA (*comes down to TOM*). Ax your pardon, Massa Payson: I'm a leetle hard of hearing. Did—did—I hear my name mentioned?

TOM. Very sorry to say, Asa, your name is not mentioned in the will.

ASA. What! didn't de ole man leave me noffin?

TOM. Nothing, Asa. (*Goes up stage to JENNIE.*)

ASA (*aside*). An'—an'—I've been weeping, and jes for nothing. Dat ole man was mean, he was, after all I've done for him, brack his boots, dust his coat—poor ole man!—poor ole fool, dat's jes what he was: I'll put no more independence on such ole buffers. Dere's one ting: he can't get fro de eye ob a needle; he's stuck da; his goose got to be cooked. (*Goes up stage.*)

DICK (*goes up stage to BELLE*). You'll be true, Belle?

BELLE. I'll be true—(*aside*) to my own interests. (*Exit, door L.*)

MRS. G. Come, Annie: we must prepare a room for Master Dick. (*Exit, door R.*)

ANNIE. Yes, mother. (*Crosses to GILBERT L.*) Good-night, Gilbert.

GILBERT. Good-night, Annie. (*Takes her hand.*)

ANNIE. I congratulate you.

GILBERT (*puts arm about her waist, and leads her up to door R.*). Not now, Annie: you shall do that when you find I am true (*she looks up at him*) to myself. Good-night. (*Exit Annie R. GILBERT goes to lounge.*)

JENNIE. You're sure you've made no mistake about the will, Tom?

TOM. I am so sure, that I feel frightened. When I feel I am doing my best, I blunder. It's just like me!

JENNIE. If you've blundered now, it would be awful. (*Exit R.*)

DICK. Now, boys, let's have a good old time, such as we enjoyed at college together many and many a time. Rosy wine, you know. Oh! I forget: Gil don't drink.

GILBERT. No, I never tasted liquor; but that's no reason why you should not be hospitably entertained in your father's house. Asa—

ASA. Yas, Massa Gilbert.

GILBERT. Bring wine for the gentlemen.

DICK. Yes, Asa, the best in the old man's cellar.

ASA. Yas, Massa Dick, de very best. (*Exit R.*)

TOM (*aside*). Hang it, I don't feel right! I wish I hadn't blabbed about the will. (*Sits on ottoman, R.*)

DICK (*moves table to centre of stage, straddles a chair, and looks at GILBERT*). The heir don't look happy. Why did the old man select him? The answer is plain: he is his son; the scandal was true, and we are brothers! If

so, he inherits something more than property. The old man was a drunkard. I inherited the love of drink from him. Gilbert has not been tempted. Let me see if I can't arouse the demon in him, that wakes in me so easily. If I can, then my way is plain. (*Aloud.*) Hallo! You two are mighty sociable, I declare! Ah, here's Asa! (*Enter ASA, with tray, on which are bottles and glasses. Places it on table. Stage grows dark.*) Here we have the opener of hearts and the loosener of tongues, — rosy wine!

ASA. Yas, sir, (*aside*) an de breaker ob heads. (*Exit R.*)

DICK (*opens bottle with a corkscrew. Smells of it.*) Ah, that's the sort! Rare old Burgundy! On the liquor-question the old man's taste was superb. (*Fills glasses. Enter ASA R., with candelabra, — candles lighted. He places it on small table L., at head of lounge; then closes doors c., and drops curtains over windows while DICK is speaking.*) What would life be without this cheery fluid to oil the grooves? (*Takes glass to TOM.*) Here, old boy; drink to the good old days.

TOM (*takes glass*). Gay old times then, Dick.

DICK (*going back to table*). Gay, you bet! (*Takes glass to GILBERT.*) If we could only live that life over again! Here, Gil, to the good old days.

GILBERT. You must excuse me, Dick.

DICK. That's not sociable, Gil. I respect a man's scruples; but —

GILBERT. I don't know as I have any scruples; but I promised Mr. Gordon, while at college, I would not drink.

TOM. So did I; but I forgot it. Just like me.

DICK. But we're not in college now.

GILBERT. Still you must excuse me.

DICK. All right. (*Goes back to table.*) Here, Asa, take the wine away. We won't drink.

GILBERT (*rising*). No, no, Dick! Don't let my refusal stand in the way of your enjoyment.

DICK. I'm not the sort of a man to guzzle good liquor, when the host refuses to drink with me.

GILBERT. If you put it in that light, Dick, I'm with you. Give me the glass. (*Takes it.*)

DICK. That's the ticket! Here goes to the good old days. (*They drink.*)

ASA (*aside*). Dar's goin' to be a good ole night here, sure's you're born. (*Exit R.*)

GILBERT (*going back to lounge*). I have drank my first glass. (DICK *fills glasses again*.)

DICK. Nothing bad about that, Gil?

GILBERT. No, Dick; agreeable to the taste. And, really, it warms me. I was getting blue over the will.

DICK. Ah! What's the matter with the will?

GILBERT. Nothing but the conditions.

DICK. And that's a mighty pretty girl.

GILBERT. For whom I have no love.

DICK. Then you are all right, Gil. Refuse.

TOM. Yes, and lose a mighty nice property.

GILBERT. I should at once; but it is the old man's desire that we should marry. I look upon it as his dying request. Have I the right to refuse? That's the question.

DICK. Well, let's drink, and then consider it. (*Gives glasses to GILBERT and TOM*.)

GILBERT (*takes glass*). I owe all to him.

DICK. Oh, don't think of it now! Here's to us three, wherever we be. (*They drink*.)

GILBERT (*excitedly*). And there's Annie, whom I love so dearly: must I give her up? (*Confused*.) How my head spins! And this wine, Dick, makes me thirsty. (*Puts glass on table*.)

DICK (*fills glass again*). Then try another.

TOM (*rises, and comes up to table*). High old wine, Dick! give us another. (DICK *fills glasses*.) I'll give you a toast: Here's to the woman we love.

DICK. That's good, Tom; sentimental and joyous.

TOM. Of course it is, — Jennie Joy us. (*They drink again*.)

GILBERT. The woman I love: that's me! That's a glorious toast. I could drink that all night.

DICK. So you shall, old boy, in bumpers too. Egad, we'll make a night of it. We'll make the old house ring.

GILBERT. I'm with you. Dick, you're a fus-rate fel (*hic*) er: I'm getting thick, my throat's dry — another glass.

DICK. The bottle's empty.

GILBERT. Bot-tle (*hic*) empty! Fill it up again.

DICK. Ha, ha, ha! that's good, capital.

TOM. Yes, what is it? Ha, ha, ha!

GILBERT (*staggering up to DICK, and slapping him on the shoulder*). I like you, Dick; and, if I had this es (*hic*) tate without an in-cumbrance, I'd divide with you: I will

now, — you shall have Belle, an' — an' — I'll take the property.

DICK. Good, good : I'm satisfied.

GILBERT. Fill up the glasses, and we'll drink to that fair division, your fair division, — Belle is fair, you know.

DICK. That's good ; but now to wine : shall I call Asa ?

GILBERT. No : I'll get it myself. Now, don't you stir until I come back : I'll bring it. (*Slaps DICK on the back.*) We'll have a night of it, old boy, — two nights, — a fortnight : you see if we don't. (*Staggers off R.*)

TOM (*on lounge*). Why, Dick, he's drunk : he is full as a tick.

DICK. I say, Tom, is he in love with anybody ?

TOM. Of course he is : why, don't you know he's in love with Annie Garfield ? (*Sings.*)

“ Annie Garfield, bright and fair,
Combing out her golden hair.”

DICK. Then it's a shame he should sacrifice himself to this proud Belle Gordon.

TOM. Of course it is.

DICK. I say, Tom, let's have some fun. While he is gone, you write out a little document, in which he declines to marry her, and I'll make him sign it : won't that be gay ?

TOM (*rises*). I'll do it, Dick : no man should give his heart without his hand. I'll do it. (*Staggers over to desk R.*) What shall I say, Dick ?

DICK (*follows him, and stands beside him*). Write : “ I, Gilbert Murdoch.”

TOM (*writes*). “ I, Gilbert Murdoch : ” that's down, looks like a snake too.

DICK. “ Refuse to accept this estate.”

TOM (*writes*). “ To accept this estate.” Go on.

DICK. “ On the condition named in the will of Gilbert Gordon.”

TOM (*writes*). “ Condition — will — Gilbert Gordon.” Go on.

DICK. “ I decline to marry Belle Gordon.”

TOM (*writes*). “ To marry Belle Gordon.”

ASA (*outside*). Don't, Massa Gilbert, — don't choke a poor ole darky.

GILBERT (*outside*). Come on, I say, come on.

DICK. Quick, Tom, give me the paper. (*Takes paper, and comes down R. TOM staggers to left. Enter, door R., GILBERT, bottle in his left hand, his right on ASA'S throat, by which he drags him in.*)

GILBERT (*speaking as he enters*). Hooray, hooray! come on, don't be bashful.

ASA. But—but—Massa Gilbert.

GILBERT. Here we are, boys, and here's Asa. (*Flings him to R.*) And here's a bottle, open it quick.

DICK (*sings*). "For we are all jolly good fellows, that nobody can deny."

DICK (*takes bottle, and brings GILBERT door C.*). Hush, Gil: I want you to do me a favor.

GILBERT. Of course I will: wh—what is it?

ASA (*back*). Now, now, dat Massa Dick up to some divilment.

DICK. You said you'd give up Belle to me.

GIL (*sleepily*). Oh! is that all? You may have her in welcome. Let's drink.

DICK. Will you give me your name to that effect?

GIL. What effect? Thought you wanted Belle.

DICK. So I do. Sign the paper, and you are free, and she is mine.

GIL. All right! give it here. (*Staggers up to desk, and sits. DICK follows him.*)

TOM (*crossing stage to L.*). Something wrong here.

GIL. Where is the paper? (*DICK gives it.*) Where's the ink? (*DICK holds inkstand.*) Dick, I like you, you're the best fellow— (*Nods.*)

DICK (*aside*). I believe he's going to sleep. (*Aloud.*) Here, Gil, sign—here. (*Places his hand.*) All right. (*DICK takes paper. GILBERT staggers up to table, takes bottle, and staggers over to lounge. DICK goes to table, and watches him.*)

GIL. Here's to the (*nods*), here's to the (*falls on lounge*), here's to the good old— (*Falls asleep. ASA comes down, and looks at him.*)

ASA. Well, I nebber!—Massa Gilbert, ob all de world! dat's too bad.

DICK. Sleep, fool, and dream of fortune. We are safe. I have his refusal, and Belle is mine. (*Looks at paper.*) What's this? (*Reads.*) "I, Gilbert Murdoch, agree to ac-

cept this estate on the conditions named in the will of Gilbert Gordon. I promise to marry Belle Gordon." (*Shakes his fist at TOM, who is nodding off to sleep, sitting on ottoman.*) Tom Payson, you have played me false.

TOM (*sleepily*). Have I? it's just like me.

TABLEAU.—ÅSA *back, grinning and shaking with suppressed glee.* DICK *behind table c., with uplifted hand and clinched fist, glaring at TOM asleep on ottoman.*
Curtain.

ACT II.

Scene same as Act. I.; curtains draped; doors open; arm-chair in place of ottoman; vase of flowers on small table at head of lounge, which ANNIE is arranging.

ANNIE. There! my foray on the flower-beds this morning does me credit: that bouquet will find favor even in the eyes of our fastidious lady of Gilroy; and Gilbert. — (*Sighs.*) Ah! no, no, he will not deign to look at them. A year has made a sad change in him. The gold he inherited, and his marriage to Belle, have completely transformed him: his days are spent in gayety, his nights in dissipation. How different all might have been, had he been left to struggle with the world! He loved me, I am sure of that; and I — no, let me not think of what might have been: fate ordained it otherwise. (*Bends over flowers.*)

(*Enter RICHARD, door R.*)

DICK. Ah! beautiful, beautiful!

ANNIE. Thank you. Red roses and white, with blue-bells, make a lovely bouquet.

DICK. Only excelled by the living bouquet that hovers so charmingly about it, — pretty white fingers, lovely blue eyes, and rosy cheeks that make the flowers blush with envy.

ANNIE (*laughs*). Indeed! but you cannot form a bouquet without green: perhaps you will furnish that.

DICK. Certainly; and, as the green supports the flowers (*puts his arm about her waist*), we shall make a charming bouquet.

ANNIE (*breaks away from him*). Dick — Mr. Gordon!

DICK. Now, don't be shy, Annie: three words will make it all right — I love you.

ANNIE. You love me! do you dare insult me?

DICK. Tut, tut! what insult is there in those words? I love you, and ask you to be my wife.

ANNIE. Never! Richard Gordon, there is a mockery in your tone that belies your protestation: you are incapable of love.

DICK. Annie!

ANNIE. You are a bold, bad man: in a heart like yours, love could not live; were it kindled, it would be smothered by your evil passions. You have insulted me, Richard Gordon.

DICK (*gently*). Annie, if I have, I humbly beg your pardon; I confess I have been a little reckless at times, but since I have returned—

ANNIE. No more: you forget we were brought up in the same house, and I know all your past life. Don't play the hypocrite.

DICK. Annie, you have it in your power to make a better man of me.

ANNIE. Have I? Then be assured I will never use it, if union with you is to be the result.

DICK. Do not be rash: look at this calmly. You and your mother are dependents in this house.

ANNIE. You forget my mother's legacy of ten thousand dollars.

DICK. No: neither do I forget its investment in certain stocks, which to-day are worthless.

ANNIE. You do not mean it is lost?

DICK. Every dollar. I have kept the knowledge of this disaster from her and you, fearing it would pain you both.

ANNIE. How very kind! I believe it was by your advice, this investment was made.

DICK. Yes; but I lost heavily too.

ANNIE. Gilbert Murdoch's money.

DICK. No: it was my own.

ANNIE. And yet you came to this house, one year ago, penniless. Richard Gordon, you cannot deceive me. You are the evil genius of this house: step by step you have led its master into folly and dissipation; by the gambler's tricks you have fleeced him of gold and lands; you are plotting his ruin; and now you unblushingly come and ask me to be your wife,—me, who would lay down my life to save him.
(*Goes up to door R.*)

DICK (*following her*). Do not leave me, Annie. I confess all you have charged me with; but now my love for you has changed my whole being. I will make amends for all wrongs by a life of noble endeavor. Annie, you have it in your power to redeem a fallen man; but give me one gleam of hope for my devotion. You are the only woman I ever loved.

(*Enter BELLE, door L.*)

ANNIE (*at door R.*). For such devotion as yours, I have only scorn and contempt. (*Exit R.*)

DICK (*looking after her*). It will be a hot hunt, but I must have her. (*Turns, and sees BELLE.*) Ah! Belle— (*Crosses to door L., confused.*)

BELLE (*sneering*). "The only woman I ever loved."— Then, Mr. Richard Gordon, what am I to consider the protestations of affection for me?

DICK (*savagely*). False—false as the blushing promise with which you deceived me. You swore you would be true to me, and the very next day sold yourself to Gilbert Murdoch for a paltry fortune.

BELLE. As you would have sold yourself to me, had I been the inheritor of father Gordon's money. I have been lucky enough to beat you at your own game; and, with so keen a gambler as Richard Gordon, I may well be proud of my conquest.

DICK. Indeed! Are you as proud of your husband?

BELLE. Oh! that's of little consequence: he's a necessary incumbrance thrown in with the estate. He goes his way: I go mine. I have wealth in abundance, pleasures uncounted, and comforts unstinted; I am envied by all my female acquaintances, worshipped by my dependents, and flattered by a noble array of fashionable gentlemen: what more could a woman's heart desire?

DICK. Heart? *You* have no heart!

BELLE. But I have fortune, and that contents me.

DICK. Yes; but riches sometimes take to themselves wings: should your fortune, what would our proud lady of Gilroy do then?

BELLE. Emulate your example, and seek another.

DICK. What do you mean?

BELLE. Annie Garfield.

DICK. She is penniless: her mother's legacy has been swept away by a bad investment.

BELLE. Indeed! Then what means your pursuit of the daughter?

DICK. I love her.

BELLE. You—love?—you, Dick? No, no; I cannot believe that: has she no expectation, no rich uncle or saving aunt?

DICK. None that I know of: I love her with a true and holy love, and I mean to win her.

BELLE. A miracle! a miracle! The man of the world, the ruined gambler, has been snared by a simple country girl, and prates of true and holy love. (*With anger.*) You shall not have her. I'll turn her out of the house! I'll kill her!

DICK (*aside*). Jealous! She loves me. (*Aloud.*) Do, Belle; turn her out of the house: I will seek her out; and, being penniless and homeless, she may be inclined to listen to my suit. You couldn't do me a greater service.

BELLE. You shall not marry her.

DICK (*goes to door R.*). We shall see. I shouldn't wonder if some day that little lady became the mistress of this house, the lady of Gilroy.

BELLE. Not while I live.

DICK (*laughs*). Don't be too sure of that; for, when riches take to themselves wings, the skilful marksman is on the watch. I'm a tolerable good shot, and perhaps one of these days a fortune may fall at my feet. (*Bows, and exit R.*)

BELLE. Can this be true? He is greatly changed. I do not like this cool, calculating way of his. Bold, reckless, and outspoken a year ago, now so gentle! There's mischief here, or else 'tis love,—love for Annie Garfield. No, no! I cannot believe that, I will not: he has no right to love another as he once loved me,—for he did love me, in spite of his denial,—and I—I—no, no! I will not confess that, even to my own heart.

GILBERT (*outside*). Asa, hallo! black boy, hallo!

BELLE. My husband!

(*Enter GILBERT C., with gun and game-bag; ASA door R.*)

ASA. Yes, massa Gilbert, here I is. Did you have good luck wid de shootin'?

GILBERT. The best of luck. Hallo, Belle! How are you, Belle? (*Takes off bag.*) Take my gun, and be careful of the bag. You're looking splendidly, Belle. (*To ASA.*)

Every shot told; glorious luck, only the flask gave out. (*Takes flask from pocket, and throws it to ASA.*) Bring me a bottle of old Bourbon, quick.

ASA. All right, Massa Gilbert. (*Going.*)

BELLE. Send the carriage round, Asa.

ASA. Yes, mam. (*Exit door R.*)

GILBERT. You're not going out, Belle?

BELLE. I am: have you any objections?

GILBERT. Objections! certainly not: only as I have been away since daylight, tramping with the dogs, you might condescend to give me a few moments of your agreeable society.

BELLE. Indeed! after the dogs, your wife; very complimentary.

GILBERT (*bitterly*). Why not? we live but a cat-and-dog life, — you and I. Belle, I'm tired of it: this is not the way folks live who love each other.

BELLE. Love each other? no.

GILBERT. Married now a year, it's time we're become a little better acquainted. I stopped at young farmer Gates's place this morning. His wife was at the door, waiting for him to come into breakfast; and when he came across the field, her eyes brightened, and her cheeks glowed with pleasure. The farmer, without minding me, put his arm about her waist, and gave her a hearty smack. It fairly made my mouth water. What should you say if I imitated his example?

BELLE. That "familiarity breeds contempt," is an excellent maxim. (*Turns coldly away.*)

GILBERT (*bitterly*). And the absence of it, sometimes, as well. The farmer and his wife work hard, have little they can call their own, yet they are very happy.

BELLE. They married for love; and we —

GILBERT. For money, a fair division. To the poor, love; to the rich, misery. O Belle! I cannot live in this way: what little manhood I have left revolts at this mockery. We are united for life, we cannot escape. Artful women have brought men — strong men — to their feet by false smiles. For me there is no such delusion. It was a cool, deliberate bargain between us, — double slavery, with gold our master.

BELLE. I do not murmur: I am well content.

GILBERT. But think, Belle, how much better lives we

could live with one united purpose. Together we might find ways of usefulness in which to turn our wealth, faint hearts to cheer, poverty to banish, sad homes to brighten. Such a united purpose would create respect for each other; and then perhaps love—the desire of all hearts—might be kindled, and happiness be ours.

BELLE. Gilbert Murdoch, are you drunk?

GILBERT. No: Heaven help me, no! through my befogged brain one gleam of reason has flashed up to show me the ruin to which I am drifting. I would save myself: will you help me?

BELLE. You talk like an idiot: love has no clause in our compact. Had it, I should not now be your wife. I married you to secure what was mine by inheritance,—the half of father Gordon's fortune.

ASA (*appears at door c.*). De carriage am here, mam. (BELLE *goes up c.*)

GILBERT. Belle, one word—

BELLE. I'll hear no more: I bear with you from necessity. Be careful, or I shall hate you.

(*Exit door c., preceded by ASA.*)

GILBERT (*sinks into chair, L. of table*). Only the money binds us: oh, curse the gold! What a different life might have been mine! she bears with me from necessity; she would glory in my death, for then she would reign supreme. She would have it all—what there is left of it: she little knows how deeply I have plunged my hands in the old man's money-chests.

(*Enter TOM c.*)

TOM. Ah, Gilbert! old fellow, I'm glad to find you!

GILBERT. What's up now, Tom?

TOM. Well, I don't know what's up; but, if you want to know what's down, it's me. (*Puts his hat over the bouquet, table L.*) I'm completely crushed.

GILBERT (*rising, and removing hat*). That's no reason why you should crush these beautiful flowers.

TOM. Beg pardon. It's just like me.

GILBERT (*resuming seat*). Well, what's the matter now?

TOM (*sits in arm-chair R.*). Old Perchant has beaten me again.

GILBERT. He always does that. You're no match for him in law.

TOM. Or love, Gil. You know he married Jennie Joy ten days ago.

GILBERT. Yes, and wondered at it. I thought you were the favored suitor.

TOM. I was; but, as usual, I blundered,—just like me. I introduced a money-bag to the lady I loved. He was captivated, proposed, and was accepted. They were married; and then there was no more joy for me.

GILBERT. But Peter is old, and —

TOM. Rich. A woman's eyes never see the old when there's a letter G before it: that hides the wrinkles. Gil, I was mad. There was a suit on the docket,—Crick *v/s.* Huber. Perchant for the plaintiff, I for the defendant. It came off—yesterday. Perchant was away on his wedding-tour. I insisted upon its being tried. It was. I knew I was a match for young Gabber, Perchant's attorney. We got along smoothly until both sides had closed. Then I rose to make my plea, when in marched old Peter, with his wife on his arm. I was floored. Oh, that plea! I got the plaintiff and defendant so mixed up that I couldn't, for the life of me, tell which side I was on. My client I made out a grizzled despoiler of the innocent, and Crick, my opponent, a meek-eyed saint; called the gentlemen of the jury perjured witnesses, and his honor my darling. Oh! 'twas just like me.

GILBERT. And you lost your case?

TOM. Lost it, yes; and was fined for contempt of court.

GILBERT. I'm sorry for you, Tom. How's the funds?

TOM. Gil, do you want me to tell you the truth?

GILBERT. If you can.

TOM. You haven't got a dollar in the world.

GILBERT. Is it as bad as that? Well, we must raise some. How about the rents?

TOM. You forget, Gil, that you have parted with your rentable property to Dick Gordon.

GILBERT. Well, there must be something left we can turn into money.

TOM. All you now possess is this house, what it contains, and the grounds around it. Value, ten thousand dollars.

GILBERT. Hm! it's going fast.

TOM. Too fast altogether, Gil. It has been, easy come, easy go, with you. Of what remains you caused me to make

a deed a week ago, when you were not as clear-headed as you are now.

GILBERT. I? For what purpose?

TOM. That I do not know. The grantee's name was left blank. For your wife, I suppose.

GILBERT. My wife?

TOM. Yes, I hope so. You are ruining yourself. Some provision should be made for her. Insert her name, and you will always have a home.

GILBERT. Where is that deed?

TOM. In the library.

GILBERT. Bring it to me.

TOM. All right. Shall I insert your wife's name?

GILBERT (*rises, furious*). No! Ten thousand times, no! I'd rather beg from door to door, crawl in the gutter, steal, starve, murder, than give that woman the power to offer me a home. (*Crosses L.*)

TOM. What will you do with it?

GILBERT. Stake it for money—for her. Tom, she wants no home. She wants money. I am her husband, and must provide for her wants. With that deed, the last of my inheritance, I will face Richard Gordon. My lands and house against his gold. If I win, the coffers are filled again. If I lose, I have done my duty to her. (*Comes L.*)

TOM. Why, Gil, this is ruin!

GILBERT. I care not. Could I break the golden chain that fetters me, I would apply the torch to this accursed pile, and dance for joy that I was free,—free once more. (*Goes up C.*) Bring me that paper.

TOM. Gil, you are mad.

GILBERT (*turns fiercely*). The paper, I say! who is master here?

TOM. All right, Gil, I'll bring it. (*Aside*.) Now, if I could only make a lucky blunder! but it's no use; my blunders only make matters worse. It's just like me. (*Exit door R.*)

GILBERT (*striding up and down stage*). It is the last chance: I'll take it. Dick Gordon is a master-hand at cards: but in this game I play to lose, and, losing, win a trick shall cost her dear. Where's my whiskey? (*Rings bell on table*.) Asa, you black dog, the bottle.

(*Enter ANNIE, door R., with bottle and glass on tray*.)

ANNIE. Here it is, sir. (*Places tray on table.*)

GILBERT (*starts*). You, Annie? Why have you brought it?

ANNIE. Asa has gone to drive Belle. Shall I fill the glass?

GILBERT. You mock me! you would not do that.

ANNIE. No: I am a servant in this house, and owe respect and duty to its master; but duty demands no degrading offices, respect the commission of no crime.

GILBERT. Yet you place it before me: why is that?

ANNIE. Answer that yourself, Gilbert.

GILBERT. Because you know I would not touch it in your presence. You are right: fallen as I am, wrecked in the very port of fortune, your eyes have never witnessed my shame.

ANNIE. And yet I know it all, Gilbert; know how deeply you have drained the cup of dissipation: have seen the power of this wily foe in your household, Richard Gordon. 'Tis he who tempted you, he who has enriched himself by your downfall, who will ruin you if you do not defy him.

GILBERT. Too late! Annie, too late!

ANNIE. (*comes c.*) Never too late, Gilbert. Am I your friend?

GILBERT. If a lost spirit, groping in darkness, could call a white-winged angel hovering afar a friend, you are indeed!

ANNIE. I am no angel, Gilbert, but, believe me, your true, devoted friend. I have watched Richard Gordon, have heard from his own lips proofs of his villany. Beware of him, Gilbert! Do not drink with him; do not touch the cards he handles so cleverly. He is playing a game in which he risks nothing; you, all. Shun him, and you will yet be happy.

GILBERT. Happy? I — no, no! you know not what you say. I had a dream of happiness long, long ago, — a life of strong purpose, a love deep and holy; but I awoke, and never dreamed again. Take away the bottle, Annie: it's a strong temptation, and I cannot much longer resist. (*Crosses L.*)

ANNIE (*goes to table*). You will think of what I have said, Gilbert?

GILBERT. Yes, yes; go now, go.

(*Exit ANNIE, with tray; R.*)

GILBERT. Heaven bless her! patient, loving still, though

I struck a cruel blow at her dear heart. Hopeful, — “never too late” upon her lips, — and in her eyes the tears of pity. I have no right to sadden her young life by my evil conduct. I never thought of that before, but now for her sake I’ll try to be a man again. If I can make her smile again, there’s something still worth living for.

(Enter TOM R., with paper.)

TOM. Here’s the deed, Gil.

GILBERT. You may take it back, Tom: I’ll not use it.

TOM. Ah, that’s good! I thought you’d think better of it. I’ll put it back; but first, to make it secure, let me insert the name of your wife.

GILBERT. My wife! (*Snatches paper.*) No, no! fool that I am! there’s no escape. (*Goes up to door R.*) Tom, I risk all for that one word spoken by you, — wife. (*Exit R.*)

TOM. Just like me! I wish somebody would do me the favor to kick me, and kick hard. Nothing but a pair of alligator boots, on the feet of a bruiser, could do justice to the occasion.

PERCHANT (*outside C.*). Be careful of the steps, ducky!

JENNIE (*outside C.*). Yes, Peter dear.

TOM. Great heavens! old Perchant and his wife — the spoons! Peter dear! that’s so, dear at any price. Shall I run? No: I’ll stay, and wither them with my indignant scorn. (*Goes R., folds his arms, and stands defiantly back to C.*)

(*Enter PERCHANT with JENNIE hanging on his arm.*)

PETER (*puffs*). That ascent is very steep. I hope, my dear, it did not weary the light of my eyes, my precious little ducky darling.

TOM (*aside*). It winded the old gander.

JENNIE (*looking fondly up into his face*). No, Peter dear, your strong, loving arm sustained me: how could I ever be weary at your side?

TOM (*aside*). Bah! I’m sick.

PETER (*clasping his hands, and looking at JENNIE tenderly*). Oh, Jennie! oh, sweetest! how I thrill with happiness as those rosy lips drop such sweet honey into my ears.

TOM (*aside*). Beeswax!

JENNIE. Don’t, Peter dear; don’t look at me in that bewitching way; you make me blush — you do — you naughty man!

PETER (*with a long drawl*). O—h, Jennie!

TOM (*aside*). Whoa Emma!

PETER. I—I—I—must have a kiss.

JENNIE. No, dear, not now.

PETER. But I must; I can't wait—I must—you duck, you! (*Throws his arms about her.*)

TOM (*very loud*). A-hem—

PETER (*starting*). Yes, your honor. Hallo! it's brother Payson.

JENNIE (*feebly*). Oh, he gave me such a fright! support me, Peter dear. (*Lays her head upon his shoulder.*)

PETER (*putting his arm about her*). Don't be frightened, darling: am I not by your side?

TOM (*aside*). They don't wither worth a cent.

PETER. Good-day, brother Payson: have you recovered from your exertions of yesterday? and how is our dear friend Huber?

TOM (*angrily*). Huber—hanged—

PETER. Ah! you're a sad dog; a sly fellow, brother Payson; but I beat you, with Crick at my back.

TOM (*aside*). And *in* your back—old rheumatics.

PETER. You shouldn't have brought on the case when I was away on my honeymoon; should he, ducky?

JENNIE. No, Peter dear, we were so happy; and then to have to hurry home, to awake from our dream of love for that hateful law!

PETER. No matter, dear: long days of delightful love are before us. You will love me as long as I live, Jennie?

JENNIE. Longer, Peter dear; your memory will be enshrined in my heart when you are gone. I shall deck your grave with flowers; hang upon the headstone with tears and sighs. Oh, Peter! then my love will be the mightiest.

TOM (*aside*). Yes, the widow's mite.

PETER. Ahem! well, don't talk about that. (*To TOM.*) Where's Mr. Gordon?

TOM. Closeted with my client, Mr. Murdoch.

PETER. Oh, yes! your client. Pretty mess he's made of it. I must see Gordon at once. Jennie darling—

JENNIE. Yes, Peter dear.

PETER. I must leave you for a few moments.

JENNIE. Don't be gone long, Peter dear, it's so lonesome without you!

PETER. Only a moment, duck; I will return on the wings of love to the fairest and best. Ta, ta, sweet. (*Kisses his hand, and exit R.* JENNIE goes and sits on lounge, crosses her hands in her lap; looks down, and sighs deeply. TOM, his hands in his pockets, takes C. of stage, and looks at her a moment without speaking. Another sigh from JENNIE.)

TOM. Jennie Joy, you're a little silly goose.

JENNIE (*looks up amazed*). Mr. Payson!

TOM. Mr. Humbug! What do you mean by selling yourself to that old fool, that superannuated bucket of law and Latin, — that antiquated Romeo —

JENNIE. My Peter?

TOM. Your grandfather! a grizzled old foggy!

JENNIE. Grizzled? His locks are golden.

TOM. The locks on his money-boxes, but not on his head. Oh, Jennie! after all my love, my devotion, my —

JENNIE. Blunders, Tom: don't forget *them*. Don't be envious, Tom, you lost the golden opportunity.

TOM. And you found the golden calf. I wish you joy of your conquest.

JENNIE. Thank you for your kind assistance: but for you, I should not have the present satisfaction of being my Peter's wife.

TOM. Oh, hang your Peter!

JENNIE. I have, — here in my heart of hearts. (*Sighs.*) Oh, Tom! such love! such devotion! "Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave."

TOM. If you allude to me, madam, it strikes me I was the slave, and not you. But now I am free; I have thrown off the chain that bound you to me, and I'm free! Ha, ha! free!

JENNIE (*sings*).

"A hungry fox, in passing by,
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la."

(*Laughs.*) Sour grapes, Tom.

TOM. Oh, I've no patience with you! I scorn you! I despise you! Bah! (*Goes up stage.*)

(*Enter PETER R., quickly.*)

PETER (*crossing to JENNIE*). Is my ducky darling pining for her Peter? (*Sits beside her, and puts his arm about her.*)

JENNIE. Yes, Peter dear. (*Lays her head on his shoulder.*) So sick!

TOM (*crosses down r.*). Just like me!

(*Enter ANNIE, door r.*)

ANNIE. Here comes Belle. (*Goes up to door c. Enter BELLE, followed by ASA c.*) Did you have a pleasant ride, Belle?

BELLE. Oh, so, so! I'm very tired. Take my hat and shawl, Annie.

(*Enter GILBERT, door r.*)

GILBERT. Do not remove them, for you leave this house forever.

BELLE. What do you mean?

GILBERT (*coming down r. to TOM*). Tom, for your watchful interest in my affairs, I thank you. Your duties are finished. I have neither house, gold, nor lands now: I am a beggar.

BELLE. How, a beggar?

GILBERT. Yes, madam: I am no longer master here. You, who have trod with me the flowery paths of ease, basked in the sunlight of fortune, must now humble your pride, and seek with me a lowlier state.

BELLE. I? never! What means this masquerade? Who is master here?

PETER. My client, madam.

BELLE. And who is he?

GILBERT. The old man's son, Richard Gordon.

BELLE. Richard Gordon?

(*Enter RICHARD, door r.*)

RICHARD (*bows*). At your service, madam.

BELLE. Oh, lost! lost! lost! (*ANNIE puts her arm about her. BELLE'S head sinks on her shoulder.*)

TABLEAU.—RICHARD c., *looking at BELLE*. BELLE and ANNIE l. c. GILBERT at table, *looking at BELLE with triumph*. TOM r. JENNIE and PETER on lounge. ASA in door c., *looking in*. *Curtain.*

ACT III.

Same scene. Curtains at windows, draped as before; door C. open; moonlight at back from R.; decanter of wine and glasses on table, R. C.; arm-chair R.; chair R. of table; desk L. C. on line with table; candle burning on desk; other furniture as before. DICK pacing piazza, smoking; TOM at desk, facing table, writing.

TOM. Finished at last! a deed of Gilroy; but to whom? That's Dick Gordon's secret. I had particular directions to leave a blank — afraid I should write the wrong name probably: it would have been just like me. He's a lucky dog. No blundering about him. Euchred poor Gil Murdoch out of every cent in a year; and now, at the end of another, he begins to give it away. I wish he'd remember me: no, I don't; 'twas foully gained, and, though I am miserably poor, I don't care to inherit dishonesty. Ah! the fandango of fortune is a funny machine. I've had my ups, and now I'm having my downs. Starving to-day on the munificent salary of five hundred a year, as Perchant's clerk. A year ago a flourishing advocate at the bar. My last flourish, Crick *vs.* Huber, was the boomerang that floored me.

(DICK throws away cigar, and comes down.)

DICK. Well, slow-coach, have you finished?

TOM. Yes, Mr. Gordon.

DICK. Let's have it *(sneeringly)*, Mr. Payson. *(Takes paper from DICK, and sits L. of table.)*

TOM *(aside)*. He's pretty well set up with his good fortune, — the beggar on horseback. *(Rises, and leans against back of desk.)* Does it look all right?

DICK. Yes, it looks all right; but your master must come up and examine it, for fear of accident. *(Looks at*

TOM.) You're a pretty figure, you are, to set up in a gentleman's house. How seedy you are! your coat's out at the elbows, your linen dirty, your shoes want tapping. Shabby, seedy, and dirty: what's the matter with you?

TOM. When a fellow continually rolls down hill, he's apt to get a little dusty. I'm not exactly "the gloss of fashion, and the mould of form," that's a fact.

DICK. I'm ashamed of you, Tom. It doesn't look respectable, coming here in this way. A gentleman likes to see his dependents well dressed; but you look like a scavenger. It's a pity you have fallen so low. But you've no energy, no tact, no talent, and no pluck. You were smart enough in college. Now look at yourself: see how it is now.

TOM. We can't all hold trumps in the game of life.

DICK. You would play a poor hand if every card was a trump. You will never make your mark.

TOM. As you have. But you've had luck. And your cards — By the by, speaking of cards, do you remember the last game you played with Gil Murdoch?

DICK. Of course: 'twas my lucky game.

TOM. A remarkable game, an astonishing game. Do you know, I was so struck with admiration of your skill in that game, that I fancied that with that pack I, too, might make my mark.

DICK (*laughing*). You — of all men! you, the bungler, the blunderer?

TOM. I did, Dick (*bowing humbly*), I beg pardon — Mr. Gordon: so, having taken the fancy, I took the cards without leave or license.

DICK (*rising*). Did you dare?

TOM. Yes: I made a sweep for the first time in my life. And those cards, Dick (*bowing humbly*), I beg pardon — Mr. Gordon — those cards — of course you didn't know — it was an honorable game, you played — those cards were marked. (*Sternly.*) A gambler's pack, made to win.

DICK (*fiercely*). Tom Payson, you lie!

TOM. No: it takes a man of talent to lie successfully. I haven't any, you know: I should blunder; 'twould be just like me.

DICK (*carelessly*). Oh, well! it's of no consequence: they could do no harm. (*Laughing.*) Perhaps you may make your fortune, if you only play them right. But you never could do that, you know.

TOM. No; but I might make something by showing that hand.

DICK (*suddenly*). Tom, I'll give you a thousand dollars for that pack of cards.

TOM. That's liberal; but I think I can do better.

DICK (*goes to table*). Well, let's talk this matter over. Come, sit down: let's have a glass of wine.

TOM. Thank you; not now. I am not dressed for a gentleman's society.

DICK (*sternly*). Tom Payson, you'd better make terms with me at once. I'm prepared to bid high; that failing, to have those cards at any cost.

TOM. Even murder.

DICK (*puts his hand behind him*). Even murder.

TOM (*coolly*). Then I'm glad I didn't bring them with me.

DICK. Coward! you dare not bring them here!

TOM. Right, Dick. I might make a blunder, and give them up at sight of the revolver you always carry. It would be just like me.

DICK. I am curious to know what you will do with them.

TOM. Keep them as a curiosity, — a souvenir of the lucky game by which you gained a fortune.

DICK. I don't believe it.

TOM. Well, then, I'll keep them to show me that if I had energy, tact, talent, or pluck (all of which you say I have not), I might, by exposing the gambling fraud by which you ruined Gil Murdoch, blow you, my fine gentleman, with your lordly manners, into the whitewashed walls of a prison. You said a few moments ago to me, "See how it is now." Permit me to express the hope that you see how it is yourself.

DICK. Tom, you might ruin me with those cards.

TOM. Just like me.

DICK. But you won't, Tom: old friends should stick to each other. I always liked you, Tom.

PETER (*outside c.*). Help! help! murder! (*Runs on c., trembling.*)

DICK (*goes up c.* TOM *goes to desk, sits*). What's the matter? Are you hurt?

PETER. N-n-no, — not hurt, but frightened. Crossing your park there, among the trees, a vagabond darted out just before me. I thought I was doomed, but he disappeared as quickly as he came. Whew! such a fright he gave me!

DICK. It was only a beggar: the woods are full of them. They do no harm.

TOM. They won't hurt you: they always run away from lawyers.

PETER. Who spoke to you, rascal? What are you doing here? Why don't you go back to your work? Don't I pay you enough?

TOM. Too much. I am thinking how I may best invest my surplus funds.

PETER. None of your insolence, puppy!

DICK. Oh, never mind! Tom's a good fellow, — a little queer, but a trump.

TOM (*aside*). Yes, trumped your trick. (*Aloud*) Dick — I beg pardon — Mr. Gordon detained me. We were talking over the good old cards — I mean, days.

PETER. Well, start yourself now.

TOM. Hadn't we better finish the deed first?

PETER. Let me see it. (TOM *rises from desk*; PETER *sits, and examines deed*.) No doubt it's full of your infernal blunders.

DICK (*beckons TOM to him, R.*). You must not leave the house until we have had an understanding.

TOM. No? I thought we had had that already.

DICK. Silence before the old man.

PETER. Yes, this is all right, for a wonder.

DICK. If I sign it, and you and Tom witness it, will it stand in law if the grantee's name is inserted afterward?

PETER. Yes; but it's a foolish way of doing business.

DICK. That's my affair. I'll sign it. (*Goes to desk*. PETER *rises, DICK signs*.) Now, Mr. Perchant. (PETER *signs*.) Now, Tom. (TOM *signs*.)

PETER. Who is to be the lucky possessor of this estate?

DICK. I've not yet made up my mind: when I do, you, as my man of business, shall be informed. Good-night, Mr. Perchant. (*Goes to table*.)

PETER. Well, well! that's short, after my journey up here, not even to ask me to take a glass of wine. That's shabby. (*Clears his throat*.) Tom, get me a glass of water: I'm very thirsty. It's a long walk from your house to mine, Mr. Gordon.

DICK (*aside*). I can't get rid of the old fool in a hurry. (*Aloud*.) Come and take a glass of wine, Mr. Perchant.

PETER (*rubs hands, and goes over to R. of table*). Ah! thank you! thank you, Mr. Gordon: that's good, rosy wine for me. Can't stay long: I left Mrs. Perchant nodding in her chair, and stole away to see that you suffered no harm at the hands of that stupid clerk of mine: once he gets a pen into his hand, he's likely to sign any name,—mine, yours—

TOM (*aside, at desk*). Or any other man. Just like me.

DICK (*pouring wine*). Mrs. Perchant is well?

PETER (*holding up glass, and looking at it*). Never better, Mr. Gordon,—never better. She's a sensible woman, a charming woman; a little too fond of my society,—can't bear to have me out of her sight; but I should be a fool to complain of that.

DICK (*raises glass*). Here's to the health of the charming Mrs. Perchant.

(JENNIE *appears at door C.*)

PETER. Thank you, Mr. Gordon: a charming toast. (*Raises glass.*)

JENNIE (*very loud*). Peter!

PETER. Eh—ah—yes, my love. (*Puts down glass.*)

JENNIE. What are you doing here, Peter?

PETER. Transacting a little business, that's all.

JENNIE (*stamps her foot*). Come here, Peter.

PETER (*rises*). Yes—yes—yes—my duck—

JENNIE. Don't duck me, you base, ungrateful, deceitful man!

PETER. Mrs. Perchant—Mrs. Perchant!

JENNIE (*stamps foot*). Shut up, Peter Perchant! I'm ashamed of you, to leave your poor wife alone in that great house, with cats howling outside, and rats scrambling inside the walls, enough to scare one to death.

PETER. Don't be afraid, my dear: the sound of your voice would frighten them off.

JENNIE. Ugh, you monster!

PETER (*folds his arms, and looks dignified*). Mrs. Perchant, respect the head of the family. (JENNIE *makes a motion as if to strike him. He runs down R., holds up his arm as if to ward off a blow.*)

JENNIE. I wish the head of the family had a few more hairs on it—just enough to give me a good hold.

PETER (*aside*). Thank heaven for my baldness!

JENNIE. Come, Peter! (*Stamps foot.*) Get your hat.

PETER. Not just yet. Tom Payson will see you home: he's just going.

JENNIE. What! send him — my old lover — home with me? Peter Perchant, do you want your poor wife kidnapped?

TOM. Oh! there's no danger of that.

PETER. Mrs. Perchant, I'll not submit to this: I'll come home when I get ready.

JENNIE. You will get ready now, Peter.

PETER. No, I won't.

JENNIE. Very well, Peter: when you do come, if you find the doors locked, and the windows fastened down, don't blame me.

PETER. What! will you lock me out?

JENNIE. Oh, no, Peter dear! only lock myself in, that's all. You can sleep nicely on the doorsteps, you know.

PETER. I should get my death. Wait a minute — just one glass of wine.

JENNIE. Not one drop. You have deceived me, sir: no business brought you here: you came to drink, — to get high, as you call it, — and then come home and break things. You mean, bad man! You took me away from my mother, you bald-headed tyrant, and now desert me. I will not submit to it. Get your hat.

PETER. But, my dear, listen to reason.

JENNIE. When you get home. Get your hat, and follow me at once. Don't let me have to come for you again. (*Shakes finger at him.*) Remember! (*Exit C.*)

PETER (*sighs*). I must submit, I suppose

DICK. A charming woman, Mr. Perchant.

PETER (*takes his hat*). Yes, indeed; and, like all charming women, fond of playing the tyrant. But, bless you, it's only play: at home quite another state of affairs: there (*pompously*) I am master.

JENNIE (*outside*). Peter!

PETER (*trembling*). Yes, my dear! I will go, just to humor her. Good-night.

DICK. A glass before you go.

PETER (*goes to table*). Yes, one; quick! (*Raises glass.*) Dick, here's to domestic felicity.

JENNIE (*outside*). Peter!

PETER (*sets down glass*). It won't go down. (*Goes off C.*)
Coming, my dear! Coming! (*Exit C. DICK and TOM laugh.*)

DICK. She married him for his money.

TOM. She was bought, and he was sold. I'll never blame my luck, when I think what might have been.

DICK (*comes down to desk*). Now, Tom, we are alone once more.

(*Enter ASA, door R.*)

ASA. If you please, Massa Gordon — Ax your pardon.

DICK. Well, what is it?

ASA. Miss Annie, Massa Gordon, she ax me would I ax you could she see you for a few minutes very particular; and I told Miss Annie —

DICK. Certainly; at once.

ASA. Dat's what I tole her. Miss Annie, says I, you jes walk right in dar: de calls ob business always make way for de calls ob beauty. But she's sort ob bashful an' timberous; an' so I came for to ax you for her.

DICK. Ah! you've an eye for beauty, Asa, as well as the rest of us.

ASA. An eye, Massa Gordon? Two — two eyes! Yas, I'm all eyes when — when dey screwtinize dar eyes on to me. Golly, dat's a good word! for dey jes bore me fro and fro.

DICK. All right, Asa: show her in.

ASA. Yas, indeed; right away, Massa Gordon. (*Exit door R.*)

TOM. I'll be off. Our business is finished for to-night.

DICK. No, Tom: you must not leave the house until we've settled our score. Go into the next room: you may be wanted soon. (*TOM bows, and exit door L.*)

DICK (*takes deed from desk*). Now we shall see if this document is worth the writing.

(*Enter ANNIE, door R.*)

DICK. Ah, Annie! You wish to speak with me. Be seated.

ANNIE (*declining*). I will trouble you but a few moments. Mother and I leave the house to-morrow.

DICK. Indeed! Is your mother well enough to be moved?

ANNIE. She is quite herself again. This long year of sickness has been terrible. Many times my dear mother

has been on the verge of the dark river; but Heaven has been kind, and she is restored to me. For all your kindness and consideration to us in this dark year, accept my thanks. We must have often tried your patience.

DICK. No: my comfortable life has been undisturbed by the illness of your mother. You have amply supplied her place as housekeeper, and I shall regret losing you.

ANNIE. You know only her illness has kept me here. The sad memories connected with this home would have driven me out a year ago, but for that.

DICK. Am I a part of those sad memories?

ANNIE. We will not speak of what has passed. You need a housekeeper: there is a young woman staying with farmer Gates, who desires a situation; she has good recommendations, and is anxious for an interview. I have taken the liberty to ask her to call this evening.

DICK. Very well: I will see her.

ANNIE. Thank you. That is all. (*Going R.*)

DICK. Annie, one moment! (*ANNIE turns.*) Before you leave my house forever, listen to me: 'tis the last favor I shall ask. This has been your home for years: I cannot see you go out into the world, to struggle with trials and troubles to you unknown, without a pang of self-reproach; for it is I who drive you out. Let me make some recompense. (*Hands paper.*) Your name upon that makes you independent of the world. It is yours if you will accept it.

ANNIE (*looks at paper*). A deed of Gilroy! This for me?

DICK. For you, Annie. I have only to write your name there, and it is yours. Shall I write it?

ANNIE. No! (*Throws paper at his feet.*) For, if I take Gilroy, I must take its master: that is the condition. Am I not right?

DICK. Annie, I love you deeply, truly! Take Gilroy and its master. You would be its queen; I, master now, your slave forever. Annie, be merciful! I never knew what love was until I met you: your love is all I covet; without it, though rich in worldly possessions, I am but a beggar.

ANNIE. You seek to bargain for my love. You tempt me with riches. You! In this fair home, already disgraced by a shameful barter of happiness for wealth; here, where ruin has been brought upon its rightful owner,—you, the

schemer, the despoiler, the felon, dare to offer your spoils for my love! Oh, this is infamous! (*Going R.*)

DICK (*steps between her and the door*). You shall not leave me now: I'm desperate! Your mocking words but add fuel to my passion. Annie Garfield, 'tis my last opportunity.

ANNIE. Let me pass, sir!

DICK. No: consent to become my wife, and I swear my life shall be devoted to you; refuse and — oh, no, no, no! I cannot threaten you. Annie, you must love me in time. (*Puts his arm about her waist, and takes her hand.*)

ANNIE. Release me! do you dare —

DICK. Any thing — every thing, to gain you!

ANNIE (*struggling*). Wretch, release me! Help! help!

(*Enter TOM, door C.*)

TOM. Did you call, Dick? (*ANNIE breaks away, and runs off door R.*)

DICK (*angrily*). Fool! no.

TOM. You said I might be wanted; and I thought the time had come when I heard that cry of help.

DICK. You blundered, as usual.

TOM. Just like me! (*Exit door L.*)

DICK. She shall not elude me thus. I must, I will have her consent. (*Exit door R. GILBERT appears at door C.*)

GILBERT. The coast is clear at last. (*Comes down, and sits in chair L. of table*) This is the charmer that tempted me once more to enter this house. (*Takes decanter, pours and drinks.*) Welcome to Gilroy, welcome to Gilroy! (*Suddenly.*) It's come to this at last: only a year ago I entered this house its lord and master, and now a beggar comes to ask for charity. (*Fills and drinks.*) Here's success to begging! (*Sets down glass slowly.*) I never dreamed it would come to this. Freed from the curse my inheritance brought me, I thought I had manhood enough to work. But, no: I could not free myself from the phantom of the chain that once bound me. I have sunk lower and lower still: I have no shame left; it's beg or starve. Dick cannot refuse me. (*Fills and drinks.*) Here's success to Dick! But this stuff is sickening: one good glass of brandy is worth a hogshead of this fine lady's wine. A cobwebbed bottle from the old man's vault would be a fortune now. What's to hinder my helping myself? I know the way; and, if no one stops me

(*rises and goes to door*), I'll prepare myself to face Dick, and beg. He cannot deny an old friend a few of the crumbs that fall from his table. (*Exit R.*)

(*Enter BELLE, door C.*)

BELLE. Annie Garfield little thought her message was for my ears, — that the once proud lady of Gilroy was so poor, that she must stoop to ask the position of housekeeper in the home where once she reigned supreme. She little knows 'tis but the first step to regain my lost position. Richard Gordon once loved me. Deserted by the wretch I once called husband, means can be found to make me free again. Once I gain a footing in this house, its master shall be brought back to his old allegiance. 'Tis no easy task, but the rich reward is worth the venture.

(*Enter DICK, door R.*)

DICK. She will not listen to me. (*Sees BELLE.*) Belle, Mrs. Murdoch!

BELLE. Good-evening, Mr. Gordon. I received your message.

DICK. My message! I do not understand.

BELLE. Probably not; because Annie Garfield was ignorant that the person who desires the situation of housekeeper and I are the same person.

DICK. You my housekeeper? Impossible!

BELLE. I hope not, Mr. Gordon. I am very poor. My husband has deserted me. I need the place, and would serve you faithfully. Will you not give me a trial?

DICK. Why, this is the very luxury of revenge. You, Belle, the proud lady of Gilroy, humbly begging a menial situation of me, whom you betrayed for wealth and station. I am amply repaid now for my slighted love.

BELLE. All that is past: you told me you never loved me, and I believed you. I only ask now for daily bread. How much I need it, you can guess, when I am driven to beg of you. (*Weeps.*)

DICK. Where is your husband?

(*GILBERT enters, door R., sees BELLE, starts, and steps back in doorway, holding door open, and looking in.*)

BELLE. I know not; I care not; it was the error of my life when I consented to be his wife.

DICK. You are right; for that made him my enemy. When he took from me the woman I loved, — yes, Belle, I

did love you, — revenge took the place of friendship; and I paused not until I had stripped him of all that attracted you.

BELLE. If you had gone one step farther, and killed him, I should have been content.

DICK. That would have been a crime.

BELLE. And is it not a crime to rob another with gambling tricks, to cheat with false cards, to defraud?

DICK. Belle!

BELLE. I know all, knew it then, but kept my lips closed for your sake. I was your accomplice, for I hated your victim.

DICK. Belle, do you speak the truth? You knew all, and never betrayed me: why was this?

BELLE. Can you not guess?

DICK. *No!*

(GILBERT steps in at c.)

GILBERT. But I can.

DICK. Gilbert Murdoch!

BELLE. My husband!

GILBERT. Yes, Dick Gordon: this riddle is easily solved. This proud, beautiful beggar — my wife — loves you, — you, the noble master of Gilroy, the villain and the cheat.

DICK. Beggar, do you dare?

GILBERT. Dare? What have I to fear? You, the desperado, play for fortunes, scheme for fortunes. I am a beggar. I have nothing in the world but this fair woman, who is still my wife. Would you rob me of her? is she worth the crime?

DICK (*sneeringly*). Perhaps.

GILBERT. Perhaps fit mate for you — scoundrel.

BELLE. Oh, this is shameful!

GILBERT. Right, my wife. I owe you much: you made my life so happy, you are such a noble mistress of my house! I could not be a man, and see you suffer such a fate. This man must die, and I will kill him.

BELLE. No, no!

DICK. Leave my house! you are drunk.

GILBERT. You lie! 'tis my house. Your father gave it to me. 'Tis you who are the intruder. Begone! (*Approaching him threateningly.*)

DICK (*produces revolver*). Stand back! another step, and I fire.

GILBERT (*furious*). My life or yours! (*Rushes and seizes his arm; pistol explodes in the air.*) 'Tis now my turn. (*Wrenches pistol from his hand, and goes to L.*)

DICK. Madman! what would you do?

GILBERT. Kill you, Dick. (*Raises pistol.*)

BELLE (*rushes up and throws her arm about DICK*). No, no! I love him. (*GILBERT fires. BELLE staggers and falls. TOM runs in, door L., and lifts her head. GILBERT goes up to door C.*)

GILBERT. Ah! what have I done?

DICK (R.). You have murdered your wife: you are free at last.

GILBERT. *Free!* Heaven help me! I am mad.
(*Curtain.*)

ACT IV.

Scene same as at the end of Act I. Door closed; curtains down. Table with glasses and bottles on it, R. C. GILBERT asleep on lounge; TOM asleep on the floor, with his feet on the ottoman. Enter ASA, R., softly.

ASA. Whew! Dar's a powerful odor of de fermented juice ob de grape in dis yer ar. Must 'a' had a high ole time las' night. (*Comes down, and looks at TOM.*) Dar's Massa Tom, gone to bed wid his boots on; his head am lebel now, shure nuff. (*Crosses over to GILBERT.*) Poor Massa Gilbert! No: he's rich Massa Gilbert now; but he'll feel awful poor when he wakes up.

GILBERT (*throws his arms, and mutters*). Oh! villain! villain!

ASA. Eh? can't mean me: he's talkin' to hisself. Well, dey may like dis fun; but give a good soun' rest, widout champagne to put me to sleep, and real pain to wake me in de mornin'. (*Goes up, and puts back curtains; opens doors; two shots in succession outside; TOM drops his feet, and sits up, rubbing his eyes; GILBERT wakes with a start.*)

GILBERT. Villain! you shall not escape me! (*Runs up, and seizes ASA by throat; ASA falls on his knees.*) I have you now!

ASA (*frightened*). Das a fac'. Don't strike, Massa Gilbert!

(*Enter DICK, C., with gun.*)

DICK. Hallo! hallo! What's up now? (*GILBERT staggers back to L., glaring at DICK; ASA rises.*)

ASA. I is, Massa Dick.

DICK. Why, Gil, have you seen a ghost? or do you take me for one?

GILBERT. What have you been doing with that pistol?

DICK. Pistol? Ha, ha, ha! that's a good one; don't know your own duck-gun. It's a duck of a gun, I can tell you. (*Takes off bag.*) Dead shot every time. I've had wonderful luck while you were sleeping off the effect of last night's carouse. Gil, I didn't know your head was so weak.

GILBERT. I sleeping? I? then it was a horrid nightmare, after all! (*Comes down, L.*) Heaven be praised! (*Laughs wildly.*) It was but a dream.

TOM. As it is getting late, I would like to rise, if somebody will lend me a helping hand.

DICK (*tosses bag to ASA*). Ah, Tom! are you there? (*Comes down, and gives hand to TOM.*) Now, one, two, three. (*Raises him.*) There you are.

TOM. Oh, ho! I'm as stiff as a poker. (*Moves about with difficulty.*) Have I been sleeping in this room all night?

ASA. Dat's so; and dat's de *rheumatiz* in de mornin'.

GILBERT. Asa, remove that wreck at once. (*Points to table.*)

ASA. Yas, Massa Gilbert: I reckon I will. (*Exit with tray, door R.*)

DICK. You look as though you had passed a bad night, Gilbert.

GILBERT. Heaven preserve me from such another, Dick! I have lived two frightful years in one night. I dreamed I was master of Gilroy, Belle my wife, and you my evil genius.

DICK. Oh, come, come! that's not complimentary to me.

GILBERT. We were a luckless pair; we hated each other. You won from me all I possessed, made me a beggar, and then, then —

DICK. Well, what then?

GILBERT. I killed my wife. O Dick, Dick! I would not live that hideous time again, even in a dream, to be master of the world. (*Crosses to R.*)

DICK. Oh, never mind! a cocktail will set you all right.

GILBERT. No. I've drank my first and last glass with you. Tempt me not again, or I shall forget old friendship, and look upon you as my deadly foe. (*Crosses to L.*)

DICK. I will remember (*aside*) wine didn't work.

TOM (*sitting on ottoman, holding his head*). Oh, my head, my head! I believe it would crack open if it wasn't so thick.

DICK. Better try a cocktail, Tom.

TOM. No, I thank you. I've had quite enough of the dog that bit me.

DICK. Gil, you had better get your breakfast; we had ours an hour ago.

GILBERT. Indeed! Do they know of this?

DICK. Nothing. I'm too old a head to split.

GILBERT. Come, Tom. (*Goes up to door R.*) You are sure, Dick, Annie knows nothing of last night's carouse? (*TOM goes up C.*)

DICK. It's all right, I tell you.

GILBERT. Come, Tom. (*Enter MRS. GARFIELD door R.*) Ah! good morning, Mrs. Garfield.

MRS. G. Good morning, Gilbert.

GILBERT. Have you quite recovered?

MRS. G. Recovered? Why, I never was sick in my life: is the man dreaming?

GILBERT. No — yes — I — (*aside*) that horrid dream! Come, Tom. (*Exit door R.*)

TOM. I feel like a fool, just like me. (*Exit door R.*)

MRS. G. (*comes down*). Dick, I am glad to have a moment alone with you.

DICK. That's kind, Mrs. Garfield. You and I were always good friends: many and many a time you have taken my part when the old man and I quarrelled. (*Takes her hand, and leads her to the lounge.*) Come, sit down. (*She sits: he throws himself on the carpet, resting on his hand, and looking up at her.*) Ah! this is quite like old times, when I was a boy, and lay at your feet, and you told me wonderful stories.

MRS. G. (*places her hand upon his head*). Ah, my boy! that was many years ago. All is changed now. I'm sorry, Dick, you have been cut off from any share in your father's wealth.

DICK (*with a sigh*). Yes, it is rather sorrowful to me.

MRS. G. I hardly expected it, for his last words were of you.

DICK (*surprised*). Of me?

MRS. G. Yes, Dick. "Tell my boy," he said, "if ever he comes back to the old home, that my last wish was that he was at my side to close my eyes, my last wish was for his happiness, my last prayer that he would forgive me for all my unkindness to him."

DICK. Mrs. Garfield, — mother, — I used to call you mother, — did he say that of me? He said “my boy:” did he mean me?

MRS. G. Yes, he said “my boy Dick.”

DICK. Heaven bless him for that! Heaven bless him for that! (*Buries his face in MRS. GARFIELD'S lap.*)

MRS. G. (*strokes his head*). Poor boy, it's a pity you and your father did not better understand each other. It's too late now. Ah! I thought that with his returning love for you, he might have remembered you when he made his will.

DICK (*rises*). He remembered me in his dear old heart, — me, whom he might have cursed with his dying breath, and done no wrong. I am content now. Mother, let others have his riches: I have his forgiveness, his blessing, and that, from a man whose heart I have wrung with my evil passions, is better than gold. (*Crosses L.*)

MRS. G. (*rising*). Dick, my boy, I am proud of you. That little flash of the old Gordon fire tells me it will yet make a blaze in the world. Don't be discouraged, if you are poor. I am rich, thanks to your father's bounty; and every dollar he left me shall be yours, as it should have been had you been fairly dealt with.

DICK. No, no, Mrs. Garfield! I have no right.

MRS. G. Tut, tut, boy! have you not called me mother? and think you a mother would see her son wronged? No, no, I'll not touch one penny: remember that. (*Exit door R.*)

DICK. Dear old lady! I believe she would do all she says, were I mean enough to accept her sacrifice. No, never!

(*Enter BELLE, door L.*)

BELLE. Good-morning, once more, Dick. Did you have good luck with your shooting?

DICK (*moodily*). Tolerable.

BELLE. Grumpy, I declare! Did you meet any bears, that you growl so?

DICK. Belle, listen to me a moment. This will — should Gilbert ask you to be his wife, what would be your answer?

BELLE. Should he ask me? Do you think he will?

DICK. Undoubtedly. A great fortune and a pretty woman are two prizes in the lottery of life a man would find hard to decline.

BELLE. If I refuse him, I lose my share of the fortune. If I accept, I lose you. What do you advise?

DICK. Accept him.

BELLE. Dick! then you no longer love me.

DICK. More than ever, Belle.

BELLE. Indeed! Then what scheme have you to be advanced by this marriage?

DICK. None, Belle. I am done with scheming. Gil Murdoch is a noble fellow, you a born lady. You would be happy in each other; while I — I — am a young vagabond. I should make your life miserable by my follies, drag you down from your high estate to want and beggary at last.

BELLE. Why, Dick, what is this? You never spoke in this way before. What has happened?

DICK. I have received a message from the dead, Belle. There could be but one reason for that strange provision. My father wished it, had set his heart upon it. Let us think of that, Belle. I'm sure Gilbert will, and accept it as a sacred trust.

BELLE. Your father, Dick? can you respect the wish of a man who turned you from his doors?

DICK. He forgave me, Belle, with his dying breath. Had I been patient, had I known his dear old heart better, how different it might have been! He might have been proud of me; and if the dead can, as we are told, look down upon us, he shall be proud of me yet. It was his wish, Belle: remember that, and, as you hope for peace, regard it. (*Exit door R.*)

BELLE. Strange! Did he read my thoughts? Did he know I would accept Gilbert, and so think — No, no! there was earnestness in his voice, and deep feeling in his face. I must think before I act.

(*Enter ANNIE, door R.*)

ANNIE. Belle, will you let me ask you a question?

BELLE (*comes up, and puts her arm about her waist*). A dozen if you please. What is it?

ANNIE. Belle, when Gilbert asks you to be his wife, what will be your answer?

BELLE (*aside*). Again! (*Aloud.*) You silly child! modest women never have their answer to such a proposal ready beforehand.

ANNIE. You like him, Belle, better than you did — when — when —

BELLE. When he asked me to marry him. Oh you heard that story — and from his lips, I'll warrant.

ANNIE. Yes, I have heard it. O Belle! do not refuse him this time. He is good and noble: you will be very happy with him.

BELLE. Do you think so?

ANNIE. I am sure of it.

BELLE. Why are you so anxious to have me accept him? You must have some reason.

ANNIE. You would be penniless if you refused, Belle.

BELLE. Is there no other reason for your speaking?

ANNIE. Yes. I thought — that is — perhaps you might have thought, that as he has paid me some little attention of late — there might be — O Belle! I only care for him as a brother. I would die for him, and it would mortify him so to be refused again.

BELLE (*hugs her close*). You silly little goose! Never fear, Annie. I'll accept him, to please you: you are sure it would please you?

ANNIE (*slowly*). Yes.

BELLE (*laughs*). To please you — here he comes. (*Goes up c. Enter GILBERT, door R.*)

GILBERT. Annie, I have been looking —

ANNIE. For Belle? there she is.

BELLE. I'll be back presently. (*Exit c.*)

GILBERT. No, Annie, for you.

ANNIE. I have something to say to you, Gilbert, that I should have said last night: so before you speak let me have a word. I am glad of your good fortune. Belle is a dear good girl, and would make any man happy: the provision in that will should not be lightly treated. Mr. Gordon wished it, and you two were meant for each other.

GILBERT. Thank you, Annie, for your kind words. And you think, as an honorable man, I have no right to decline the alliance proposed?

ANNIE (*after a pause*). Yes.

GILBERT. I am glad to find you so sensible, Annie. Some people believe that a union of hearts is what constitutes a true marriage: but it is now understood that a proper respect to the wishes of others is preferable to that sentimental nonsense. Ah, Annie! you are an excellent counsellor. Here comes Belle: I will act at once.

ANNIE. I will leave you together. (*Goes R.*)

GILBERT. No, stay, and see how well I follow your advice.

(Enter BELLE and DICK, arm in arm, c.)

GILBERT. Belle, can I have a word with you? (BELLE comes down c., DICK remains back. ANNIE talks with DICK.)

BELLE. Certainly, Gilbert.

GILBERT. I am anxious that there should be no further anxiety among us, concerning the provision of Mr. Gordon's will.

BELLE. Yes, Gilbert; and you are about to propose —

GILBERT. A settlement. (TOM and JENNIE appear, door c.) I congratulate you on your accession to this fine estate. Although I have received advice to the contrary, I decline to offer my hand without my heart.

DICK. What, are you mad?

BELLE. And I will not be outdone in generosity by you. I decline the offer you were expected to make; and so the will is broken.

DICK (comes down l.). Belle, what have you done?

BELLE (gives him her hand). Been true to myself, Dick, in spite of the temptation, thanks to you.

DICK. You're a noble girl. But who inherits now?

TOM (comes down c. ANNIE and JENNIE back). I.

ALL. You!

TOM. Yes. (Takes out will, and reads). "In case the said Gilbert Murdoch and the said Belle Gordon mutually decline to marry, I bequeath all my estate, real and personal, after my just debts and the legacies herein mentioned have been paid, to Thomas Payson and his heirs forever." That looks like it.

(Enter PETER, c., with bag.)

DICK. Then you are the heir. What luck!

TOM. Just like me. Yes, I am proud to say, I am master of Gilroy.

PETER (comes door c.) That's false.

TOM. The governor! (Goes r.)

PETER. You master of Gilroy? Humbug! How did you find that out?

TOM. By this will, which I found where you could not, in the box marked "G." My eyes were sharper than yours.

PETER. Let me see it. (Takes will.) H'm! pity your wits were not as sharp as your eyes. This is rubbish, five years old: there is another.

GILBERT *and* DICK. Another will!

PETER. Yes, signed by Mr. Gordon three weeks ago.

JENNIE (R. *pulls* TOM'S *sleeve*). Blundered again, Tom.

TOM. Just like me.

PETER. The last will was confided to the care of Mr. Tom Payson. Now, sir, where is it?

TOM. I tell you I placed it in the box marked "G."

PETER. Did you? Here is the envelope you placed there. Would you like to know its contents? (*Shows envelopes.*)

TOM. Certainly I should.

PETER. Very well. (*Takes out paper, and reads*), —

"Ye Muses now, my tongue employ,
To sing the charms of Jennie Joy."

JENNIE. Good gracious!

TOM. Ye gods and little fishes! (*Thumps his head.*)

PETER (*reads*): —

"Ye tuneful warblers, joyous swell
In praise of her I love so well."

Bah! what stuff!

(*Reads*): —

"The purest gold without alloy
Is dross beside my Jennie Joy."

Now, sir, what have you to say to that?

TOM. Guilty, with a recommendation to mercy,

PETER. Now, sir, where's the will?

TOM. I have it. Those verses were intended for the editor of "The Gilroy Clarion;" and he must have the will by mistake. I'll run and get it. (*Takes hat from table, and comes down, c.*) Very queer. (*About to put on hat; looks in it; then slowly looks at other characters; then into hat again; whistles, and takes from hat an envelope.*) Just like me.

PETER. Well, sir, have you found it?

TOM. Here it is. (*Hands will; PETER opens it, and looks at it. Enter ASA, door C.: MRS. GARFIELD, door R.*)

PETER. This is the last will and testament of Gilbert Gordon. As I am in a hurry, I will postpone the formal reading of it until evening. The old gentleman was very kind to you all. Legacies of two thousand dollars each are

bequeathed to Mrs. Garfield, Tom Payson, and Annie Garfield; thirty thousand to Belle Gordon. Let me see: one other? (*Looks around.*)

ASA. Was yer looking for me, Massa Richard?

PETER. Oh, yes! Asa, a thousand dollars.

ASA. Thousand dollars for dis ole darky! Bress my soul! Dat's fine. Oh, dat good ole man! I always loved him. Thousand dollars! Poor ole man!

PETER. There are a few other legacies; and the bulk of the estate is divided equally between his two sons.

ALL. Two sons!

PETER. Yes: one known as Richard Gordon, the son of his first wife; the other, the child of his second marriage (he was privately married), known here as Gilbert Murdoch.

(DICK and GILBERT clasp hands warmly in c. of stage: each exclaims, "Brother!")

PETER (R. C.) Yes, brothers: all shall be explained in good time. By the provision of this will, you, Gilbert, are to hold and keep Gilroy. And now I must run. I will meet you again this evening. (*Exit c.*) (*Positions: GILBERT and DICK, C.; ANNIE and BELLE, L.; MRS. GARFIELD, R. C.; JENNIE, R.; TOM between her and MRS. GARFIELD; ASA back.*)

DICK. Gil, old boy, I congratulate you on your good fortune. You will do credit to the old home.

GIL. We share and share alike: the house is large enough for both. We will have no division.

DICK. All right; but you are the master of Gilroy.

MRS. G. I'm glad of it, Gilbert; you will make a noble master. Here are my keys. (*Gives keys.*) You will want a younger housekeeper now?

GILBERT. Do you think so? Perhaps it would be better. Annie! (*ANNIE crosses to him; DICK goes to BELLE.*) You hear your mother's words. Will you take her place in my house?

ANNIE. If you wish it, Gilbert. (*Holds out hand for keys.*)

GILBERT (*taking her hand*). No: you shall not rob her of her place. You must be the mistress of my home, as you have long been the mistress of my heart. Take your keys, mother. (*Gives keys to MRS. G.*) Our lady of Gilroy desires it. Am I not right, Annie?

ANNIE. But what is to become of Belle?

BELLE (*gayly*). Oh! never mind if she is left out in the cold.

DICK. No; for there's a warm corner in my heart, waiting to receive her. O Belle, you're a trump!

BELLE. No, I am not. I've had a hard struggle to conquer myself. But you helped me, Dick; and I shall love you as long as I live. (*Gives hand.*)

DICK (*kisses her hand*). Heaven bless you, Belle!

TOM (*to JENNIE*). They are pairing off. What should you say if I talked to you in that way?

JENNIE. That you were blundering, as usual.

TOM. I have made a mess of it, Jennie, and no mistake. Why don't you say yes, at once, and keep me out of mischief?

JENNIE. For a very good reason: you have never asked me.

TOM. I never asked you?

JENNIE. No: you have beaten about the bush, but never called the bird.

TOM. Just like me. Then, Jennie, will you marry me? Will you say yes, at once?

JENNIE. Yes, at once. It's just like me.

GILBERT. Asa.

ASA. Yas, Massa Gilbert.

GILBERT. You will have the old wine-vault cleared at once of its contents. Let all the liquors be poured into the river.

DICK. What, Gilbert, all those glorious stores?

GILBERT. Every thing. If you and I, Dick, hope for peace in this world, we must banish that portion of our inheritance forever. That glorious wine has shown me in hideous dreams what might have been; and I could not sleep in peace beneath this roof with that evil spirit about me.

DICK. All right, Gilbert: I am satisfied. I've seen the time I would have sold my soul for one fiery draught. I hope that time is past. Let it go: better so. With land and gold in plenty we can be happy.

GILBERT. Gold and lands? will those make you happy, Annie?

ANNIE. Yes: for they are yours, Gilbert, — rich gifts that generous hearts can well display. You will be no miser with your wealth.

GILBERT. No: we will have no hungry mouths or aching hearts on our estate. So you are happy. Yet you would have given me up?

ANNIE. Because I feared I stood in the way of your success; I fancied, — I know not what.

GILBERT. You have no fears now?

ANNIE. No. With your love, I fear nothing. It is the realization of a dream.

GILBERT. The dreams of innocence are ever bright and joyous. 'Tis uneasy conscience fills disturbed slumbers with hideous visions. Happy the man who wakes to feel misery is but a dream; that truth and honor are the germs of happiness; and, best of all, that true love is better than gold.

SITUATION.

L.

C.

R.

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